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VOLUME 5 ISSUE 4

APRIL 1997

**FINAL
FANTASY VII**



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First I'd like to say what an honor it is to bring you the US exclusive on Konami's new Castlevania for the PlayStation. We've perhaps never chased down a game so vigorously as this, and I am forever in Konami US and Japan's debt for making it happen. I'd love to divulge the US title of said 3D masterpiece but Konami is on a mission though down to two possibilities, has not been reached.

We've had a tough run of it this month, assembling the publication amidst the hammering thunder of construction as we expand the GameFan offices making room for our growing book division and MegaFan. So the arrival of Castlevania along with an issue of predominantly good software was indeed welcome.

It's great to see the continuation of gaming legacies and from the looks of things, that evolution is not about to change. Not only are sequels to the games we've cherished for years, like Megafan, Castlevania, Street Fighter, Star Wars, Contra, and Final Fantasy, abundant, but new games as well are gathering new and old users alike and spawning sequels at a record pace. Off the top of my head, Resident Evil, Tomb Raider, Gex, Crash, and Nights all have sequels in the works.

Not unlike the movie business, our industry is sequel driven. It makes sense. If something works and there's room for improvement and/or enhancement, while remaining true to the original formula, gamers, like movie-goers, will be a part of it. It's when a sequel is made for money's sake that things tend to get a tad ugly. There's nothing worse than that sinking feeling when you've built up excitement for a product due to what it's based on and then unwrap it to find a worthless scrap of bad game theatre.

It all boils down to the corporate/marketing side allowing the creative side the freedom and trust necessary to produce gold. When the two mix the end result is usually tragic, but working in tandem, each staying on his/her side of the fence, things usually turn out better all the way around. Let's hope we enjoy the latter, as things progress throughout the reign of 32/64 bit gaming and into the gaming scene of tomorrow.

While we're on the subject of preserving the industry, which can be put in peril, I must express my concern regarding copying devices, which have once again reared their ugly heads. Touted as a means of never paying for a game again, this is simply not true. These devices are not only illegal but the end result of their use is higher prices across the board and, should they become widespread, it's not unlikely that certain companies may divert their development dollar elsewhere. I can't imagine pouring years of creative energy into a game only to see an incomplete version circulating, or people giving it away for free. If we want great games we have to show a little respect for the people who make them. If we all play nice together, the end result will benefit us all, and in a world as crazy as ours, video games are a big benefit.



UM, I THINK SOMEONE FORGOT TO PAINT US.

DON'T LOOK AT ME!

AMH! WE'RE GAMEBOY!!

WHO NEEDS PAINT WHEN YOU'RE AS PURDY AS ME!

I FINALLY MADE THE MOST HEAD AND IT'S NOT FANTASY!!

I FEEL MAKE-UP!!

I FEEL MAKE-UP!!

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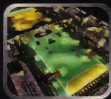
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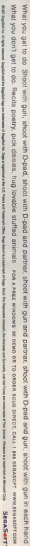
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What you get to do: Shoot gun, shoot with D-pad, shoot with D-pad and partner, shoot with gun and partner, shoot with D-pad and gun, shoot with gun in each hand. What you don't get to do: Facilitate poetry, push casseroles, find invisible stuffed animals. FOR A FREE NEWSLETTER, SIGN UP AT WWW.SEAFOOD.COM. What you do get to do: Support sustainable seafood and the Seafood for People campaign. For a complete list of participating restaurants, visit www.seafood.com. Seafood for People is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit. All proceeds are donated to the Seafood for People Foundation. © 2010 Seafood for People. All rights reserved.





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TOP TEN MOST WANTED

READERS' TOP TEN

1. Tomb Raider - PS/Saturn
2. Mario Kart 64 - N64
3. Tekken 2 - PS
4. Wave Race 64 - N64
5. Suikoden - PS
6. Crash Bandicoot - PS
7. Final Fantasy VII - PS
8. NiGHTS - Saturn
9. Persona - PS
10. Twisted Metal 2 - PS



READERS' MOST WANTED

1. Final Fantasy VII - PS
2. Resident Evil 2 - PS
3. Tekken 3 - Arcade
4. Soul Blade - PS
5. Tomb Raider 2 - PS
6. Goldeneye - N64
7. SFA III - Arcade
8. MegaMan 8 - PS
9. Zelda 64 - N64
10. Crash Bandicoot 2 - PS



GF EDITORS' TOP TEN

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Castlevania X - PS | 5. RayStorm - PS |
| 2. Final Fantasy VII - PS | 7. Phantasy - PS |
| 3. Shining the Holy Ark - Saturn | 8. Havoc Hopperhead - PS |
| 4. Wild Arms - PS | 9. Metal Slug - Saturn |
| 5. MegaMan 8 - PS | 10. Dyrnwile Headly - Genesis |
| 1. Rally Cross - PS | 6. Doom 64 - N64 |
| 2. Black Dawn - PS | 7. SFA 2 - PS |
| 3. Turb - N64 | 8. Perseus the Rapper - PS |
| 4. CoolBoards - PS | 9. SoulBlade - PS |
| 5. Jet Moto - PS | 10. Choro Q - PS |
| 1. Final Fantasy VII - PS | 6. Puzzle Fighter 8 - Saturn |
| 2. Castlevania X - PS | 7. Turb - N64 |
| 3. Virtual On - Saturn | 8. Mario Kart 64 - Nintendo 64 |
| 4. SFA 2 - Saturn | 9. RayStorm - PS |
| 5. Suikoden - PS | 10. SoulJugentel - Saturn |



- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Street Fighter III - Arcade | 6. Assault Suit Leynos 2 - Saturn |
| 2. Final Fantasy VII - PS | 7. GTI Club - Saturn |
| 3. Castlevania X - PS | 8. Tehris Jr - Keychain |
| 4. Mario Kart 64 - N64 | 9. Turb - N64 |
| 5. Elevator Action Returns - Saturn | 10. Target Earth - Genesis |
| 1. Street Fighter 3 - Arcade | 6. RayStorm - PS |
| 2. Super Mario Kart 64 - N64 | 7. Shadows of the Empire - N64 |
| 3. Street Fighter Turbo - SNES | 8. Doom 64 - N64 |
| 4. Final Fantasy VII - PS | 9. Turb - Dinosaur Hunter - N64 |
| 5. SoulBlade - PS | 10. Street Fighter Alpha 2 - PS |
| 1. Mental Hearts - PS | 6. Dark RW - N64 |
| 2. RayStorm - PS | 7. Strider - Genesis |
| 3. Castlevania X - PS | 8. World Wide Soccer '97 - Saturn |
| 4. Assault Suit Leynos 2 - Saturn | 9. Wanderbey 3 - SMS |
| 5. SoulJugentel - Saturn | 10. Chaotic - 32X |

DEVELOPER'S TOP TEN

This Month's Guest:

STANLEY LIU
PRESIDENT/CEO, KROMOS
DIGITAL ENTERTAINMENT

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Turok - N64 | 6. Star Gladiator - PS |
| 2. Mario Kart 64 - N64 | 7. Tekken 3 - Arcade |
| 3. Twisted Metal 2 - PS | 8. Tekken 2 - PS |
| 4. SoulBlade - PS | 9. Suikoden - PS |
| 5. Final Fantasy VII - PS | 10. Bushido Blade - PS |

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Third Prize:
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Remember, no cheap codes from previously published US magazines! Winners will be drawn each month and displayed in the only place where cheaters prosper. (Current subscribers who win a subscription will receive a one-year extension.)

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THIRD PRIZE WINNER:

JON STEFFEN, CHANDLER, ARIZONA

HIKARU & KNIGHTMARE present:

MARIO KART 64

MAVNES 64

SHORTCUTS!

With MK64 currently riding high in the all-format charts, GameFon proudly presents Nightmare and Hikoru's mini Mario Kart 64 strategy guide, complete with new shortcuts that'll make your competitors cringe! Sorry, but due to the lack of space we'll include the many other secrets we've found in the next issue!

KOOPA TROOPA ISLAND

Although most people already know about the cave short cut on this track, did you know that it is possible to make the jump into the cave without using a Mushroom item? Simply tap the jump button just before you reach the top of the ramp and, if you're in the right position, you'll enter the cave. Also the item above the small mound (which you have to use the large ramp to reach) is ALWAYS a spiked shell, even if you're in first place.

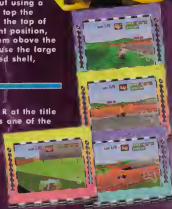
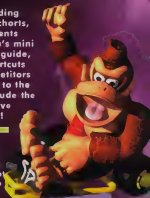
MARIO RACEWAY

Considered to be the true racer's track (just tap L or R at the title screen for your fastest time), Mario Raceway contains one of the most spectacular shortcuts in the game. As you approach the mountain side corner leading down to the giant mushroom U-turn, drive slightly up onto the grass and then power down towards the outside lip of the corner using a Mushroom item (see sequence). Hop just as you reach the edge of the road and, if you've timed it right, you can clear the wall, cutting at least seven seconds of your lap time! You can land on both sides of the T-junction in the wall, although the right hand side saves more time.

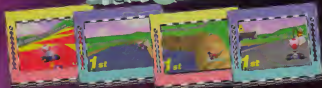
CHOCO MOUNTAIN

Using the same principle as the Wario Stadium shortcuts, slide and head directly into the wall directly below where the railings are in 100 and 50cc mode (see sequence).

Time it right, and even if the railings are there, you will still bounce up over the ledge and onto the higher portion of the track. The earlier you try this short-cut, the higher the wall, and the tougher it is to accomplish.



SHORTCUTS!



ROYAL RACEWAY

This shortcut **ONLY** works in 150CC mode, so it can't be used in Time Trial, I'm afriad. As you approach the second speed chevron on the large jump, turn left just as you hit the chevron and head out left off the jump towards the mountain. You can't make it all the way to the road, but if you can manage to land on the mountain side near the road (your character should go POOMPI!), you'll fall into the water and be placed back on the track near where you fell in, instead of back up on the jump!



WARIO STADIUM

1. Just past the starting line, turn left on the first bump in the track and head directly into the wall at about 50-60 KMH. Just as you are about to hit the wall, press jump, and if you time it correctly the jump should propel you up over the wall, and into the mogul field on the other side! Remember, you must hit the wall dead on.



2. Now, turn around and head back towards the wall section you just came over, only further down behind the starting line (you can see it over the wall). By using the same technique as detailed above (sometimes it helps if you power slide into the wall as well) you can bounce back to the other side of the track and cross the starting line for a lap of time of under seven seconds!!! This piece of wall is much trickier to climb than the first, and it takes more practice to master. If you're having trouble, try using a heavier character (Kong, Wario or Bowser), or try using a Mushroom item to give you an extra bit of speed as you collide with the wall.

3. If short cut 2 is a bit too difficult (or cheap!) for your liking, try this one for size. As you approach this right hand corner (see screen shots) power slide into the boards on your left exactly where we show you, and once again tap jump just as you collide with the wall. Time it right and you'll clear the wall and land on the finishing stretch of the lap!



RAINBOW ROAD

Near the start of the

track, as you approach the large, steep drop in the road, steer hard left and tap jump the moment the track starts to dip. If done correctly you will leave the track and fly into space, only to land back on another portion of track way below you ... cutting out a third of the lap!!!



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SEGA SATURN

1-2
PLAYERS



SOUL EDGE/BLADE SONY PLAYSTATION — ENDING, STAGE CYCLE, SOUL EDGE



In a previous Hocus Pocus, we mentioned that all of the characters in Soul Edge have changeable endings and to do so, you have to tap all of the buttons rapidly. Well, we now have the correct buttons to press for each and every ending. This should make things much easier on your hands... Sorry!

Taki - Press X.

Voldo - Press UP and DOWN on the control pad rapidly.

Mitsurugi - Use the control pad to move Mitsurugi left and right and forward. When you get close to Tanegashima, press SQUARE or TRIANGLE to deliver the strike.

Siegtreid - Press TRIANGLE.

Sophilla - Press RIGHT on the control pad.

Li Long - Press SQUARE or TRIANGLE repeatedly.

Rock - Press TRIANGLE.

Hwang - Press CIRCLE.

Cervantes - Press TRIANGLE.

Seung Mina - Press UP or DOWN repeatedly.

To get Soul Edge without beating the game with all of the characters, just leave the in-game time clock resetting (you'll see it in the OPTIONS screen in the upper-left hand side). When it reaches 20 hours, you will automatically receive Soul Edge as a playable character! Cheater!

To play on the Asia and Colosseum stage (which is only available in Edge Master Mode), simply set the ring size to 20 meters in the option screen. Now play a normal vs. game. It should first start off on Cervantes' stage, but play a few more times, and voila! The echo of the Colosseum awaits thee!

Is fighting on the same stage getting on your nerves? Memorized all of the tunes yet? Have you seen the birds on Seung Mina's stage more times than you care to remember? Had those we've got the code for you! When selecting your character, press and HOLD, L1 and SELECT on the first controller. Continue holding until you've finished selecting your character and until the match starts. This should start a cycling process through the stages (Ack!).

FIGHTERS MEGAMIX SEGA SATURN (IMPORT) — PRO ACTION REPLAY CODES

Having trouble getting off of the characters in this awesome brawler? If you happen to have a Pro Action replay for the Saturn, you're in luck! Don't forget to input the Master Code!

MASTER CODE: F600924 C305
B600280 0000

PLAYER 1
INFINITE LIFE: 1606556C 01FF

VANDAL HEARTS SONY PLAYSTATION (IMPORT) — PRO ACTION REPLAY CODES

Yeah. A debug code! Unfortunately, only for those with a Pro Action Replay. Hey, see I help it if the majority of my mail consists of Mortal Kombat (for the Genesis?), Twisted Metal 2 (and some Part 1), and Sonic the Hedgehog or Sonic and Knuckles for the Genesis? C'MON PEOPLE! GET WITH THE COOL CODES!!!

DEBUG CODE: 80142434 0000

ALL RIGHT PEOPLE! I WANT SOME UP-TO-DATE CODES! FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD, THERE'S A GUY UP FOR GRABS! IF YOU GUYS DON'T STOP SENDING ME THESE ANCIENT CODES, THEN I'M GONNA HAVE TO AWARD LOLLIPOPS AS FIRST PRIZE! — WAKA & CHIEF HAMBLEYON



DESTINY

is in your hands.

But time
is running
out.



Real Time Radio Interaction

You'll encounter authentically rendered aliens, scientists, marines, gorbies, mutants, hybrids, and computers.



Cop an Attitude

When dealing with aliens, you can be nasty or you can be nice. It's your choice.



20 Minutes of Rendered Chases

Highly detailed mini-movies explain your mission, show flashbacks or what's happening on other levels.



4-D Real Time Gameplay

Move whenever you want, whenever you want. Get advice, ask questions. Or just walk away.

Konami® presents Broken Helix™. Brought to you in incredible Real Time 4-D. Where there's no right way - or wrong way to accomplish your mission. You've got to ask questions first and shoot later. Or you just might end up whacking the only guy with the information you need to get out alive. But don't take too long, or you'll end up becoming alien luncheon meat. Broken Helix stars Bruce Campbell as Jake Burton, the marine commando explosives expert assigned to find out why scientists are threatening to blow up Area 51, (yes, that Area 51) and to stop the mutated aliens from escaping. Either by curing them, or by destroying them. Or you might choose another scenario, that has you turn into an alien-human hybrid. Or perhaps you feel like being an evil scientist this time around. The choice - and the outcome, is totally up to you. So enter the world of Broken Helix, where the only sure thing is that there are no sure things.

BROKEN HELIX

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CLASSIC
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GAMES IN DARK, DINGY,
SMELLY ARCADES.

YOU CAN PLAY THEM
IN YOUR DARK, DINGY,
SMELLY ROOM.

GRAB YOUR JUSTIFIER AND START
SHOOTING - LETHAL ENFORCERS I & II™
AND CRYPT KILLER™ ARE READY
FOR YOUR HOME MACHINE.



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Legend
Graphics
Control
Play mechanics
Music
Originality



**TAIL OF THE SUN - PS
GAME OF THE MONTH!**



**BLAST CORPS
NINTENDO 64
ACTION/ADVENTURE**

It's not the convention, but concept behind Blast Corps that has me so excited. I'm not sure how much I'm into it, but I'm not sure how much I'm into it. I'm not sure how much I'm into it, but I'm not sure how much I'm into it. I'm not sure how much I'm into it, but I'm not sure how much I'm into it.

G C P M O 80

In an age where originality is a rare thing indeed, Blast Corps comes as a breath of fresh air. It has the problem (creatively) more than any other game of its kind. It's not the problem (creatively) more than any other game of its kind. It's not the problem (creatively) more than any other game of its kind.

G C P M O 90

After how many, Blast Corps is perhaps the most original of the lot. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

G C P M O 83



**SENTIENT
PLAYSTASIS
PSYGNOSIS
RPG**

Psychosis' Sentient is a real concept (the ability to compare video games), and places it within the context of a science fiction, but it's not the most original of the lot. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

G C P M O 81

Psychosis' Sentient is a real concept (the ability to compare video games), and places it within the context of a science fiction, but it's not the most original of the lot. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

G C P M O 88

What a strange, strange game. The bizarre speech system Psychosis has implemented is excellent. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

G C P M O 82



**MECHWARRIOR 2
PLAYSTATION
MECH**

As much as you go, and they don't go with you (with the exception of the character, the story is all about the game). It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

G C P M O 78

In putting MW2 over to the PS, the game has regressed to the point of being a real risk. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

G C P M O 84

The reason C-Bits makes its way to the PlayStation, albeit in a simplified form. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

G C P M O 77



**RALLY CROSS
PLAYSTATION
SONY
RACING**

And I thought MW2 was a tough game. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

G C P M O 85

There are a lot of good racing games on PS. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

G C P M O 87

We've had a number of 3D racing games on PS. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

G C P M O 94



**VANDAL HEARTS
PLAYSTATION
KONAMI
STRATEGY**

Vandal Hearts brings new life to an otherwise tedious category. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

G C P M O 88

There is a huge hole in the American market for a decent strategy game. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

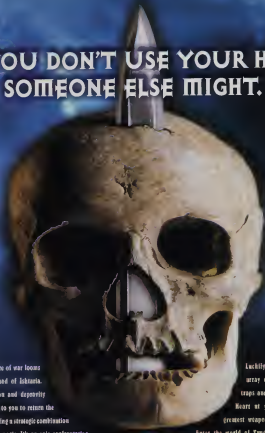
G C P M O 90

I love this game. I've played almost every strategy RPG known to man, and Vandal Hearts is the best. It's not the most original of the lot, but it's not the most original of the lot.

G C P M O 93



IF YOU DON'T USE YOUR HEAD SOMEONE ELSE MIGHT.



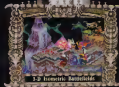
The spectre of war looms over the peaceful land of Iskaria. Terrorism, corruption and depravity run rampant. It's up to you to return the land to democracy, using a strategic combination of wit, muscle and magic. It's an epic confrontation that unfolds on multiple, glorious, 3-D isometric battlefields.

Luckily, you have an awesome array of weapons, spells, booby traps and The Great Sword Vandal-Heart at your command. Plus the greatest weapon of them all—your brain.

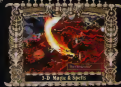
Enter the world of Vandal-Heart. Where a sharp sword is no match for a sharp mind.



Classic RPG Combat



3-D Isometric Battlefields



3-D Magic & Spells



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VANDAL-HEART'S

VR BASEBALL TIP 9

LAY DOWN THE PERFECT BUNT AND
SQUEEZE THE RUNNER HOME WITH
SIMULTANEOUS BATTER AND
BASERUNNER CONTROL.



Officially Licensed by
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MAINTAIN CONTROL MARCH 25TH

NEW! VR BASEBALL '97.

MORE CONTROL THAN ANY OTHER BASEBALL GAME!

VR Baseball '97 is the next generation baseball game that lets you control both the batter and baserunners simultaneously. Hit and run, tag up, steal, stretch out a double or execute a squeeze play. VR Baseball's completely new, easy-to-use controller design provides total bat control for power, contact, bunt and pull-hitting as well as control over pitch selection and speed with unlimited pitch locations. You can even control a real 3-D camera that lets you play from any position or angle because only VR Baseball has a true 3-D engine.

After 3 years of internal development and a total commitment to quality, VR Sports delivers a winning roster for the '97 season:

Virtual FieldVision™ technology creates an immersive, ultra-realistic, gaming environment that lets you play the game from any view or perspective. You can even play from the ball's view if you don't mind getting knocked around.

Four uniform options per team including updated colors and team logos for 1997. Plus, four play options and three difficulty settings for the skill level most challenging to you.

Instant access to pitch selection, speed and control for unlimited plate locations without menus. Total bat control for power, contact, bunt and pull-hitting without tipping your hand to your opponent.

Super-fast Season Play made with top 10 or full stats. Plus, mid-season All-Star voting and game.

Plus, a true physics model controls velocity, rotation, gravity and air friction for true flight, bounce and roll for varying surfaces like AstroTurf, grass, dirt and fences.

VR Baseball '97

Try it. It's new. It's different. You may never go back to your old game again.



Total control over all aspects of game play including simultaneous batter and baserunner control.



Play baseball in a true real-time 3-D world with unlimited 360° views and motion captured polygon models for all players.



Updated stats, rosters, uniform styles, logos and inter-league play with a real-time in stadium scoreboard and big screen in stadium television.



Over 700 Major League Baseball® players and all 24 3-D Major League Baseball® stadiums including three new stadiums: Atlanta, Anaheim and Oakland.



VR SPORTS™

The Difference Is Real.™



COMING 3/25/97

IN DEVELOPMENT

Clay Fighter

EXTREME OR 63-N-A-THIRD?

Look up your children, Clay fans—the Doh is back! Currently under development

by Interplay Productions are both a PS and N64 sequel to *Clay Fighter*, the 16-bit sleeper hit that featured animated plasticine models smacking each other up side the head.

Although technically both versions are *Clay Fighter 3*, the PS version will be called *Clay Fighter Extreme*, while the N64 version will come with the 'amusing' moniker, *Clay Fighter 63 1/3* (no, I didn't make that up). Both versions will feature 30 characters ("motion captured" off plasticine models, no doubt), 30 interactive

backgrounds (that let you knock your opponents into new areas, Ki-style), new characters and the return of some old favorites (e.g. Mr. Frosty, The Blob, Taffy).

The story finds the Clay Fighters, both new and old, plane-wrecked on the exotic locale of Klaymodo Isle. Here they must do battle against the evil Dr. Klagenheim/Von Kln (riiiggght), the world infamous and crazed

"clayentologist" whose goal in life is to make all the world and the life within it putty in his hands. Will he succeed? His latest "Clayotic Claymorphosis Mutagen" may guarantee just that! What the heck is CCMP? Beats me. But it sure sounds cool.

New characters include Houngan, an evil local witch doctor; Lookjaw Flook, a beagle with a skull-naw man; a trio of tumblers called the Zappa Yow Yow Boys; and a cyber-bunny named T-Hoppy. The fights take place in locations all over Klaymodo Island,

including beach and jungle stages, with each character possessing his own background and story line.

There's no word yet on how the Clay Fighter control system is going to change to incorporate the new 3D environments, or about any new game-

play features, but rest assured that the slapstick sense of humor and wacky moves that characterized the original games will make a marked return. We'll keep you posted. You lucky people, you. K.

THE SHOTS ALONG THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE ARE ACTUAL N64 DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM SCREENS—ALL OTHERS ARE MOCK-UPS



IN DEVELOPMENT

DIMORPHICXON

GameFan recently had the chance to visit the DreamWorks offices for a early look at *The Lost World*, the game incarnation of Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* sequel due this summer.

An almost guaranteed hit, it's not surprising that a game is being developed around it, for both the PS and Saturn. But with Spielberg involved in initial stages of game creation, *The Lost World* could prove to be above your usual movie based game. What we have seen shows that far looks impressive.

The most striking aspect of the game is the look of the actual dinosaurs themselves. Using proprietary software (which DreamWorks has named Morf-x technology), an amazing level of character fluidity has been achieved. By stretching the dino textures map around the 3D model, typically unsightly polygon overlapping and glitching at the joints is summarily removed. The Morf-x technology also allows for great control, as the real time model simply morphs into whatever position you request. For instance, you can make a dino jump in the middle of a roll with no break in the character's animation, even though this move wasn't necessarily intended by the designers. This constant smoothness almost makes the characters look pre-rendered, even though they're all rendered on the fly.

As for the game itself, it is presented in the now familiar 2.5-D of *Pachomolium* and *Clockwork Lame*. And it's easy to see why, as it allows for the precision movements of 2D while still allowing for a cinematic flare with a tagged moving camera. It still looks 3D, even though you don't have complete freedom of movement. So though you are limited to a set path, the designers have broken this up by implementing a branching system allowing you take different paths within levels.

In the early version we were shown, the sound effects had yet to be completely implemented. Some effects were in, such as the now classic T-Rex scream—and it sounded great, just like in the movie. A booming



CARNOTAURUS

symphonic score is planned, at which a MIDI version was in place, and it too was very good; very well composed. In fact, the developers even half-seriously joked that it's difficult to get any work done with the soundtrack attracting their attention.

The Lost World is still very early, so final play mechanics have yet to be nailed down. There are no enemies to attack as of yet, and there's still a great deal of overall tweaking that needs to be done. But, if indeed, the rest of the game turns out to be as impressive as the dino's animation, another rare occurrence of a genuinely good game inspired by a film may be at hand. Look for further updates in the coming months on what is sure to be a big game this summer. **SD**

COMING FEAST ON A DEAD TRICERATOPS

**THE GREATEST BASKETBALL PLAYER IN THE UNIVERSE
AND THE BEST LOVED RABBIT ON EARTH.
NOW ON A VIDEO THAT'S OUT OF THIS WORLD!**



OWN IT ON VIDEO!



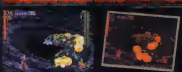
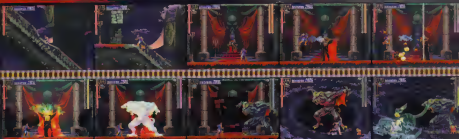
Available on Soundtrack Album on Warner Sunset/Atlantic CD's and LaserDisc.

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PLAYSTATION NATION
COVER STORY
CASTLEVANIA II

JOURNEY BACK TO 1792 and the Transylvanian Countryside of Romania



After a series of epic battles, Richter Belmont finally succeeded in destroying Count Dracula, the ancient vampire who had been most recently resurrected by the dark priest, Shafi. One night 4 years later, under the bright glare of the moon Richter mysteriously vanished.

With no idea of where to begin her search Maria Renard set out to look for him. It was then that fate intervened...



Castlevania, the castle of Dracula, which is rumored to appear only once every century, suddenly and mysteriously materialized.

Meanwhile, powerful forces were at work in the life of a man named Alucard. The very same Alucard who had previously teamed up with Ralph C. Belmont to destroy his immortal father, Vlad Tepes aka Count Dracula, Alucard, in order to rid the world of his own cursed blood line, sealed off his powers and entered what was supposed to be an eternal slumber...

But now, that sleep has been disturbed. Alucard is aware of the evil that has once again arisen in his homeland.

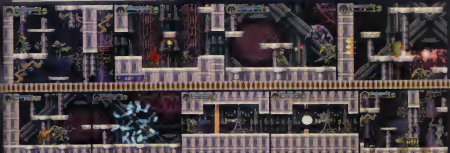
The time has come once more for the forces of good and evil to engage in their ancient battle.

Dracula's castle beckons for you, in...

And so our adventure begins as Alucard enters the castle and you first glimpse the most highly animated character in Castlevania history...



ALCHEMY LABORATORY



As I'm writing this, listening to the music as the game sits idle, I am reminded how I once felt about gaming some years ago, before they'd broken the ill barriers, when a great game was more of a phenomenon, like *Castlevania 4*, or *SNES* or *Bloodlines* on Genesis. The same can be said of many on 8-bit game as well. But things have changed considerably... or have they? Those of you who've been around for some years will undoubtedly celebrate the arrival of *Castlevania* on the PS, but I fear that those accustomed to 3D and polygons may view CV as less than it really is. For those people I would recommend perhaps a look through *Super Metroid* followed by this game when it's released, which is laid out in a very similar configuration. As just take my word for it: If there is a game which could cause one to stand in the moonlight, close their eyes and summon a theme, *Castlevania* is it. As you play this phenomenon among an hand-drawn splendor, the music which will accompany you is among the finest ever produced, as it has been with all of the *Castlevania* adventures.

Since the storyline presented this introduction, I'll get right to the game then. After playing out the climactic ending of *Dracula X* like last installment in the series as Richter Belmont, you'll witness something truly incredible... Alucard. The son of Dracula himself, this character is drawn and animated beyond belief. He is so graceful in his movements that for the ten hours I've been playing I'm still in awe of his movements. As you acquire powerful items and weapons he becomes all the more mesmerizing. As lead character you, he is the best I've yet seen.

The levels in this installment are all linked, similar to CV on the NES or, as I mentioned before, *Super Metroid*. As soon as you reach the Library you'll want to purchase the map and begin filling in the vast areas before you. As you journey

MARBLE GALLERY



OUTER WALL

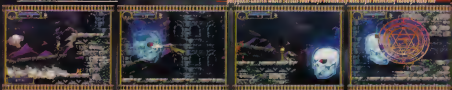


on, you'll talk to Maria quite often and meet some of the strangest creatures ever imagined. Each is accompanied by some scary effects as they perish, which I'll get to later. As you search high and low amongst cavernous locations throughout and outside of the castle, the emphasis is placed on finding magic spells, flying friends, precious stones which you can exchange for money, magic capes, potions and other items necessary to unlock the wealth of areas you can't access. Areas on the map are not highlighted until you've traversed them... and it's a big castle.





CLOCK TOWER



press below. Breath-taking. In the Clock Tower, the weather is equally unsteady as layers of fog twist in the background and huge glowing shafts fly about, leaving for a taste of human (well, half-human at least) flesh. Additionally, every enemy you kill is accompanied by some awesome effect like a pillar of fire or ethereal blast. It's just amazing. The first time Alucard jumped through the water I almost cried.

As I'm sure you've already assumed, the control is utter perfection to the point of your pants wetting and the bones... forget about it. I'll describe the one which manifests this legend. It's a massive sunset of twisted bodies and, as you creep it forth, by this time, a powerful blast, many drop off and come forth with some short apart, limbs flying. As you back away, eventually you'll uncover the hideous ones, a sharp army with laser tracking. Only Namco can assemble such beautiful master of you for us to shred. I'm 34% into the adventure and, as I'm sure you've gathered, loving it. With every new level comes music from the gods along with more creatures I've never seen, my magic spells are multiplying and I'm scared to the hilt. Alucard can carry two weapons or one and a shield along with equipped spells, capes, and armor.

The game has gotten so good in parts I've actually stopped playing to cover what I've seen. Before I close this [fabulous] preview and in case you're wondering, the original CV enemies are all here, the flying medusa heads, crumbling skeletons, shiny heights, along with many more twisted hearts from Transylvania.

Believe it or not, there is a lot more to tell, regarding the storyline, hidden places and faces, etc., but I've been sworn to secrecy. With the imminent review, these things will come. Until then... Count the days.

ROYAL CHAPEL



Not unlike every RPG ever created but now in the CV saga, Alucard gains MP (magic points) and HP (hit points) as he defeats enemies. So the longer you play, the stronger he gets, which makes the exploration element quite rewarding.

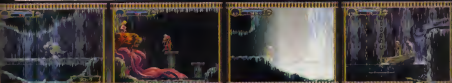
Staphanically speaking, it looks could kill. I'd be dead. CV has some of the most beautiful art I have ever seen in a video game, from the backgrounds to the enemy sprites, of which there are none—has more—than ever before. All are a sight for sore eyes. Even in the absence of parallax, the backgrounds are stunning, but for the most part you'll be playing among parallax you never thought you'd ever see on the PS. Up to six translucent levels with even the faintest bit of detail moving deep in the scenes. But it doesn't stop there. Beyond the parallax are special effects which far surpass any previous in the 2D realm. It is in the Royal Chapel where your jaw will drop as you gaze at layers of clouds blowing forth or negotiate a polygonal church which swirls four ways simultaneously with light reflecting through onto the

COLOSSEUM



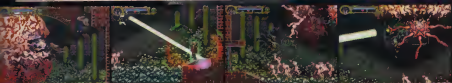


GROUND WATER VEIN



Castlevania is a huge game, so if you're thinking you've seen it all, or even most of it in this preview, I'm happy to say you have not. We will, of course, return with maps, tips, and in-depth strategy information, hidden treasures, weapons and all the rest of the glorious parts that make Castlevania different from any game 2D is back! Let's hope it's here to stay!

MORE CASTLEVANIA TO COME...



DEVELOPER - KONAMI

PUBLISHER - KONAMI

FORMAT - CD

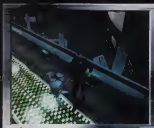
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - TBA



E. STORM
Give me a year like this and I'll be the happiest man alive.



I was just as surprised as Tokuhiko the first time I saw Riverhill's *OverBlood*. We imagined it would be a total *Resident Evil* rip-



off, but after playing it once, the comparisons ended. I mean, who would have expected this genre to go real time (as in real-time polygons) so soon. *OverBlood* has a powerful storyline and strong exploration elements, but the fully realized 3D environments require all kinds of skills—like platforming, fighting, etc. It's fair to say that *OverBlood* might be a bit guard. EA's porting it over from Japan, so we thought we'd give you another look.

The first thing you'll notice about *OverBlood* is the amazing 3D engine. As opposed to *RE* (or *Perfect Weapon*, or *Time Commando*), *OverBlood* is shifting a playfield constructed entirely of polygons, not bit-maps or pre-renders. The scary thing is, and you might want to check out the screenshots now, sometimes the areas look so good I forget that



they're just texture-mapped polygons and actually see them as real environments. They can be viewed from almost any angle, and often the polygons will be layered within one another (such as objects within glass ceilings, windows, etc.) creating a dazzling effect. Many areas have that strange depth sensation, where you're walking into the screen and the environment suddenly seems to be a whole lot bigger than you thought.

OverBlood doesn't play as well as it looks (that would be something), but I can handle the problems. Lars, the main character, has really stiff control. And, as I've mentioned, *OverBlood* throws a little platforming action into the mix, so stiff control (game jumping, slow response time) doesn't help. Thankfully, this type of game doesn't need perfectly accurate controls to play properly, but man, it would've been nice.

Either way, it's cool to see another Japanese title making its way stateside. Although I have yet to see how well the voice and text translation was handled by EA, I'm sure they'll do a fine job, as always.

Once we get the final, I'll be here with the review. G

OverBlood

P
PREVIEW



DEVELOPER - RIVERHILLSOFT

OF PLAYERS - 1

PUBLISHER - ELECTRONIC ARTS

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

FORMAT - CD

AVAILABLE - APRIL



GLITCH
HAND ME THAT
THE TAG,
WILL YA?

BLOW DOORS OR BLOW CHOW!



FEATURES:

- 25+ cars to choose from
- Race in either direction on 5 different tracks
- Includes original Pikes Peak Hill Climb
- 12 different camera angles
- Build and design your own tracks using the first-of-its-kind track editor
- Design your own car, tires, suspension, color and more!
- 1 or 2 player action

PEAK PERFORMANCE



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It would seem that Sony's PlayStation has been around long enough and reached a high enough level of market penetration that more interesting and experimental games are reaching store shelves. *Psychosis' Sentient* is one such game.

In *Sentient*, you take on the role of Gerrit Sherave. On your way to Space Station Icarus, your ship crash lands in its docking bay (which is nicely detailed in the intro), and you are in a race against time as the station's orbit decays and is pulled towards the corona of the sun. From here, your adventure begins and you soon find out that all is not as it appears on the seemingly doomed space station.



I suppose one could describe *Sentient* as a science fiction RPG. There are things to puzzle over and people to talk to. And there are some strange looking people indeed. All of the characters are full three-dimensional models with some insane looking faces mapped onto the head polys. As bizarre as it looks, it's also quite cool as the characters have the

PSYGNOSIS TAKES INTERACTION TO A NEW LEVEL!

sentient



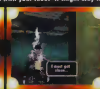
ability to emulate by slight changes in their facial expressions. In fact, you yourself have this ability. As you interact with the characters, a small representation of your face appears in the lower left hand corner of the screen allowing you to alter your expression between varying degrees of happy or angry.

Most elaborate, however, is the system allowing the player to speak to the inhabitants of Icarus Station. By selecting different bits of sentences from a menu, a relatively complex and specific statement or question can be constructed. The combination of your facial expressions and the enhanced query and declaration system allow for new level of "real life" conversation hitherto unknown to the likes of the PlayStation.

In the end however, all these accoutrements mean nothing if the game isn't any fun to play. I'm as big a critic of the shortened attention span of late twentieth-century society as the next like-minded individual, but the pacing of this game can be quite slow at times. Perhaps this would seem less of a problem if the settings of the game were more diverse. Basically, be prepared to do a lot of walking along a lot of similar looking corridors. Indeed, aside from different colored lighting, all corridors look basically the same. There are, however, some nicely detailed rooms and there is only a bit of texture warping when you get too close.

Still, once you get into it, the story is quite engaging. And you do get a feeling of really talking to people through the well-developed speech system and recurring characters. Thankfully, there is also incentive to play more than once as multiple paths lead to multiple endings. I respect Psychosis' effort to try something new. While not totally successful, in my opinion, it still impresses. If you can

look past the lack of action, you'll more than likely find yourself completely immersed in the story, trying to figure out what to do next to save the station and solve other mysteries aboard Icarus. Oh, and don't do that with your face. It might stay that way. **SD**



DEVELOPER - PSYGNOSIS

OF PLAYERS - 1

PUBLISHER - PSYGNOSIS

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

FORMAT - CD

AVAILABLE - MARCH '97



SUBSTANCE D
YOUR FACE MIGHT
STAY THAT WAY

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RALLY CROSS

Okay, time to get dirty. Rally Cross takes you off-road racing like nothing else! This game keeps me playin' for hours on end, which is a rare thing these days. To put it plain ly: This game's a blast!

The first thing you'll notice (after you've turned off the eighties-sounding music) is the incredible graphics. From the flares of the arena lights in the stadium course and the snow falling in the alpine course, to the awesome lighting you'll see (not to mention the leaves you'll kick up) while motoring through the English countryside in the garden course, this game is gorgeous.... The frame rate's excellent, too, and there's virtually no pop-up. Look closely, and you can actually see the driver and passenger in every vehicle!

The sound effects, as well, are top-notch. Every hump-and-jump is accompanied by an amazing creak or groan (at least), and you'll really appreciate the splosh of the mud or small stream you'll inevitably find yourself traversing. The music, however (as mentioned earlier), leaves something to be desired....

The toughest part of this game (judging by the general response here at GameFan), has to be the control. The four wheel, independent sus-

pension makes for some bizarre bounces, and learning every dip and hump on the courses is a must. At first, you'll spend a lot of time upside down, bangin' the L2 and R2 buttons, trying to flip yourself back over. If you're easily frustrated, stay away from Rally Cross, or you'll go broke replacing shattered PS controllers.

With six courses, three variations of each, and two directions, you've effectively got thirty-six different tracks to choose from, although you start with only three. Beating various types of seasons will open up the rest, and you'll eventually have twenty (yes, twenty!) different four-wheelers from which to choose. Also, after Normal, Head-On, and Mixed seasons have been beaten, you'll get to try your

hand at the one of the most frustratingly fun modes of play I've ever seen: the Suicide mode, in which your three opponents race the track in the opposite direction. This makes for some spectacular crashes, but winning a Suicide season at the Pro level is extremely difficult.

All in all, a great game from Sony Interactive, with plenty of challenge and depth for the ninja gamers out there, and plenty of fun for the occasional gamer, too. I haven't had this much fun since Jet Moto! If you're a fan of unusual racers, I highly recommend Rally Cross. R



NOTE: BECAUSE MOST OF OUR AVAILABLE SPOILERS IN RALLY CROSS! ONLY THE ENDINGS OF KIND-ONE RACING YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF BEHIND THE WHEEL OF THAT CAMOUFLAGE FOUR-WHEELER ON THE END, THOUGH!! COME AGAIN, IF U CAN BEAT THAT!

R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER: SONY INTERACTIVE

OF PLAYERS: 1-4

PUBLISHER: SONY

DIFFICULTY: AAAAAAHHH!

FORMAT: CD

AVAILABLE: NOW



REMEMBER
NO WINKS
ALLOWED!

They have been born of fire —
hopefully they won't melt.



Developed and published by

Interplay

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www.interplay.com



R REVIEW



DEVELOPER - STUDIO 1

OF PLAYERS - 2

PUBLISHED - PLAYMATE

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

FORMAT - CD

AVAILABLE - APRIL



E. STORM
THE MOST FUN
YOU'LL EVER HAVE
ON 2 WHEELS...
WITHOUT LEAVING
HOME.

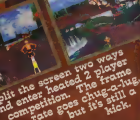
Tweaked, tuned, and ready for your approval, VMX Racing, the first PS motocrosser, is ready for action.

Six tracks and four teams made the final cut in which you can choose practice, two-player, or circuit modes. In the much needed and thankfully provided practice phase of VMX you'll master the varied courses which range from the super tight, exhibited in the two stadiums (New Orleans And Anaheim), to the wide open spaces of Orlando, New England, The Pacific Northwest, and Sea Jose.

Without intensive course dissection you'll spend the bulk of your race day face down. Partly because the control is ultra-touchy. In order to make tight hairpins do-able the designers have inserted very precise steering increments. Touch the D-Pad slightly and the rider's trajectory changes dramatically, hold it down and hit the throttle and you can turn on a dime. Since each course is made up essentially of twisting terrain it is required that you thoroughly memorize each track and its nuances. This is of maximum importance, because not only will hitting even the slightest off-course sprite crash you but the loose terrain will slow you down considerably. Should you fall behind, which is easy (crash

three times on the 1st lap and you may as well reset) in VMX, the pack will quickly pass as they stay pretty tight throughout the first lap. Bring the holeshot and hold the lead through a lap and a half and you'll get some breathing room. The camera distance you choose (from 4) also has a profound impact on the control, so practice with each, find the one you like and then get to know each track.

Once you've achieved oneness with the control crank the tunes and get ready for some serious racing. Though totally unforgiving, VMX is a gas to see and play. Once you enter the zone you'll find the racing action some of the most intense around. Not only are the speeds high but coupled with the rugged guitar riffs of Tommy I. the combo effect is like a testosterone elevator. VMX's few flaws lie mainly in the



Split the screen two ways and enter heated 2 player competition. The frame rate goes chug-a-lug but it's still a kick.



Indoors, Super Cross is an exercise in precision, laced with tight turns and gnarly jumps...

Outdoors, things are more spread out, but equally challenging... if not more so.



Cool! I can watch my every move in replay. Look at me go! Whesooo!

Check out the diamond vision! (For the folks in the cheap seats)



VANDAL HEARTS

Sukoden continues to be a best seller in the US, and *Final Fantasy VII* is a runaway (understatement of the year) hit in Japan. RPGs are back! Unfortunately, if you don't play imports, and you live in North America, you're probably used to slim pickin's, high prices, and bad translations. Alas, there is hope! CD-based systems make the price-point negligible, and translations can be completed in a few short months—if not sooner (*Wild Arms*, for example, is a quicky). The translation teams are getting better too, way better. "English" is pretty much a thing of the past, and most translators finally have a clue when it comes to tasteful humor, strong writing, and good box and instructions artwork. Time to dig into Konami's latest translation, the

strategy RPG *Vandal Hearts*. Skipping the import *Vandal Hearts* turned out to be a smart move. The storyline is good, really good. In a strategy-type game, this is so important. The translators have chosen wisely, holding back on the dumb humor, and emphasizing the drama and action. In *Vandal*

Hearts, you play the role of Ash Lambert: leader of the Defense Special Force, a crack merc division of the Ishitaran army. Sinister politicians decide that the government must rule by the sword, and the army becomes a crazed militia force. Despite his sworn allegiance to the army, Ash cannot allow his tyrannical superiors to continue their blood-reign over the population. 15 years earlier, his father was forced to make the same decision, as the Ishitaran government sought to dominate, not govern, their people. He fought valiantly, but was

Eleni

R
REVIEW

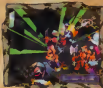


GENRES: RTT
PUBLISHER: KONAMI
FORMAT: CD
1-2 PLAYERS
DIFFICULTY: DEMANDING
RELEASE: 1995

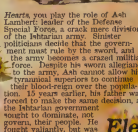
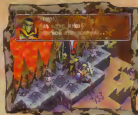


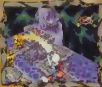
GLITCH
RPG 9/10 Yee
Hick, Yee!

2 2



Ash





eventually crut down in battle. The government covered their tracks with lies, and the Lambert name became synonymous with treason for many years. And so, Ash must decide: Should he simply follow orders to avoid suffering the same legacy of humiliation? Or should he infiltrate the corrupt government, and put an end to the senseless bloodshed? He's the good guy, so go figure. You can have the story all to yourself when you pick-up your own copy of VHL for now, it's on to gameplay (beautiful, perfect gameplay).

Vandal Hearts has every gameplay element I



First Suikoden, now this... Konami = RPG gods!



could ever need in a strategy game, without being overly complex. In battle, moving your troops is accomplished *Shining Force*-style (flashing strips), indicating how far you can move, or how far away missile attacks can strike. You can check out anyone's (good or evil) movement, anytime, by simply clicking on them. The multi-level battlefields affect movement rates (going uphill, through swampy land, etc.), but certain characters maneuver these conditions better than others. In other words, you have to play the environments as hard as you'd play the enemies. Another strategic factor: Counter-attacks.

Every time somebody attacks, their victim is allowed an automatic return-hit. This works into the movement strategy, 'cause if you let the enemies surround you, not only will all primary blows hit, but every counter-attack as well (big pain!). Do you see the synergy of play-mechanics? It's perfect. Battles are so logic-driven, so second-nature, I guarantee you'll be personalizing your tactics at every turn.

Vandal Hearts also has generally good music, great polygonal graphics (the texture art is nice), and quick loading times. Best of all, there's an in-battle save that allows you to come back to the exact same spot, mid-battle, anytime. Anyway, I've been a strategy RPG player for years and years and I implore you to trust these final words: Vandal Hearts is the most enjoyable strategy game I've played in quite a while. It's also one of the best PS games available (nice one Konami, you rule!).

Vandal Hearts screams "BUY ME!"

Clint

G



Diego



TAIL of the SUN

WILD, PURE, SIMPLE LIFE

Tail of the Sun is a first for Sony for a number of reasons. It is one of the first so-called 'adventuring' games to be released on the PlayStation, one of the first to add moves for Sony (i.e. you don't gun down tanks or wrestle with Tai Kwai Du experts in this title), and definitely the first almost exclusively featuring 'cave-people'. Now, for Japanese punter may look out numerous Yee for odd and compelling gaming experiences like this, but the more conservative US gamer? Well, Sony is giving you the chance to change your attitude and play more than the usual array of PlayStation console titles with this offering. And after days of constant evolving, I'm extremely happy that they did.

Forget your pre-conceived ideas about video games; Aridink is about to show everyone outside of Japan just how unique, fresh and exciting ideas can be translated onto silicon. With the previous (and undoubtedly excellent and trippy) *Aquana's Holiday* under their belt, Aridink has travelled to the next realm of undiscovered video-gaming and brought an *Wild, Pure, Simple Life: Tail of the Sun*. From the very inelegant cave paintings start to dance and the tribal drums begin, you know you're on your way to a whole new gaming

experience. A suitably strange opening, full of vibrant colors and imagery, gives way to revealing the task at hand; this is the first cave-man simulation! No, don't turn the page just yet, ye of little faith! read on and find out why this gets an unequivocal Hambleton recommendation.

First you choose your kaimite dragger (either male or female), then walk, run and leap about a prehistoric landscape on a desperate mission to solve! This hyper-cool idea leads you a weird and wonderful romp around a detailed (not to mention almost limitless) 3D landscape. There's trees! And flowers! And monkeys! And mind-altering effects! Then you'll find your cave-person's statistics: how fast they'll run, attack, breath underwater and even think, all of which you'll need to explore... and multiply!

You'll wander to northern tundras, scarp through caverns, drag yourself through scorching deserts and sleep at the most inopportune moments, all in the name of tribe progression. Of course, as you wander, without any clue at all why you're there, you'll run into all kinds of fruit, rocks and various flora and fauna... all of which can be eaten. That's right. This adventure may be about exploration and bludgeoning (and not monkeys to death, but the

R
REVIEW

P
PlayStation

DEVELOPER - ART DINK

PUBLISHER - SONY

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYING - 1

DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - APRIL



CHIEF
HAMBLETON
WHY WE HAVE BIG
POINTY STICK!



about filling your rapidly expanding stomach with all kinds of tasty/poisonous plants and berries (don't try this at home, kids!).

So, you'll spend an hour or seven (time simply flies when you play this!) simply jogging around your world, curious at the pretty lights in the sky, weird-colored animals, and strange bursts of techno music when you enter different zones, and then you'll plunge into the sea and drown. Oops. But no matter, because there's a virtually limitless supply of mutated offspring (some much more scary than others) to take your initial wanderer's place. So, you'll magically be transported back to your village, another Cave-person will descend from the sky, and another exploration begins.



After this has gone on, you'll begin to become more adept at killing, finding spears, tackling the bigger beasts in the game (Purple texture-mapped bippos? "Ha! We have big pointy sticks! SPLITCH!!") and search for mammoths. And then the dawn of realization will hit you: You're on a quest for mammoth bones! And not just a couple of tusks, mind; but a huge tower of bones stretching from the village square up to the sun itself! Aha! *Toll of the Sun*!! Yes, it's all beginning to fit together now...



Yes, there's angular polygon monsters and some limited polygon pop-up in the horizon, but the sheer peacefulness and strangeness of this title had me hooked for days at a time. There's simply so much to explore as your tribe becomes more and more proficient, that you'll go from a skeptic to a full-fledged *Toll of the Sun* fanatic like me, constantly on the look-out and actually living the *Wild, Pure, Simple Life*. Novel, in-depth, very relaxing and fun; the best caveman simulation ever!! Just don't become too attached to your caveman, okay? Well done to Sony for giving this the US release it deserves and who knows, perhaps *Poropopu* and *Ropper* could be next...



CH

MECHWARRIOR2

31ST CENTURY COMBAT

THE PC SMASH MAKES A SMOOTH TRANSITION TO THE PLAYSTATION!



I was curious as to how Activision was going to convert MechWarrior 2 to the home platforms. In its original PC form it was a complex action/strategy simulator with the emphasis placed firmly on

traditional shoot-'em-up feel. Has this shift in balance worked? Well, kind of...

As with the PC original your objective in MW2 is to rise up through the ranks of your chosen clan by successfully completing the

missions in your campaign. There are 48 missions in total, evenly split between the two clans (Wolf and Falcon), with 16 all new missions exclusive to the home consoles. All the PC missions have been modified to include more action and destruction than their PC counterparts, while the console exclusive missions feature some nice twists on the usual MW2 objectives.

Before you enter battle you get to choose from a wide range of mechs (all taken from the BattleMech universe), each balanced in terms of physical attributes and

strategy. Would the PS version retain the same deep, tactical gameplay? Well, in a word, no.

In order to cater to the 'shallow' console market, Activision has re-jigged the MechWarrior formula and switched the emphasis from strategy to action. The controls have been simplified (a necessity given PC MW2's reliance on keyboard commands) and the pace has been upped, with more enemy mechs per mission and the addition of arcade style power-ups like Stealth, Speed and Invincibility to give the game a more



R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER - QUANTUM FACT

PUBLISHER - ACTIVISION

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2 W/INK

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - FEBRUARY '97



KNIGHTMARE
MECHWARRIOR,
ARCADE STYLE!



weapons, and you'll find that certain Mechs are more effective on particular missions than others. While selecting your Mech, you also get to choose which weapons you want to group together to fire simultaneously, although the more power you lump into one blast, the quicker your mech overheats.

Technically, Activision has done a good job of replicating the PC's aesthetics. The graphics are ok—nothing special, but not too bad either. Even though the mechs are pretty basic in terms of number of polygons, their actual design is cool, and the lighting effects are a nice bonus. Just don't expect your PS to replicate the crisp hi-res visuals of the PC. Be content with a decent frame rate! A mention must also go to the new sound effects and music, which are excellent, and really contribute to the overall experience.

The control system actually translates surprisingly well to the PS pad, with every button employed for a particular function. It's been simplified from the PC mouse/keyboard set up, but the feel of piloting a huge war machine remains intact. Just like the PC, your mech can't strafe or make quick maneuvers—dodging is impossible—and ultimately it's more like a simulation than an action game. Despite



FORGET THE STRATEGY! BLAST ENEMY MECHS APART IN FULL-BLOWN FUTURE WAR!

Activision's intention of making MW2 more action orientated, you still can't treat the game as a straightforward blaster. Just wading in with all guns blazing is a sure-fire way to get your ass kicked pronto. You need to approach each arena strategically, making sure you keep geographic superiority at all times and picking off foes from a distance.

And that's MW2's main problem. It doesn't know whether it wants to be an arcade-style shooter or a simulation. There is a lot of action, but because of the limited 'simulation' style control of your mech, the pace is fairly slow, and ultimately it all gets a bit repetitive. The different mission scenarios go some way towards spicing things up a little, but no matter what your mission objective, it always comes to down to the same old thing: shooting mechs.

I hope that doesn't all sound too negative. I had a lot of fun with MW2 and if you're a fan of the genre, so will you. It's a good conversion and certainly the best of its kind currently available for the PS (way better than *Krazy Ivan*). It's not perfect, not by a long shot, but if you're willing to put up with a few basic flaws you'll discover a sophisticated and engaging mech sim that should more than satisfy any PS owners hungry for mech combat. **X**



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AVKGF

The background of the entire page is a stylized illustration. At the top, a large, close-up profile of a young man with spiky blue hair and a red headband looks down. He is wearing a red, tattered shirt. Below him, a young man with long, wavy brown hair and a confident smile looks towards the viewer. He is wearing a brown jacket over a dark shirt. To the left, a woman with long brown hair, wearing a yellow and red dress, stands looking up. In the background, there are rocky, mountainous terrain and a small white cat-like creature perched on a rock. The overall color palette is dominated by warm tones like orange, yellow, and red, with some cooler blues and greens in the background.

Sony and
Media Vision's
RPG
masterpiece
comes to the
U.S...

WILD ARMS



It's finally beginning to look like the American video game market understands RPGs, thanks in no small part to Sony. Look at the PlayStation's track record: The US has only missed two major RPGs. *Age of Empires* and *II*. (Wait, make that three; we missed *Papadocrocks*. But trust me, you didn't want it in the first place), and Japanese PlayStation owners got... Thankfully, Sony is composing this newly established tradition quite rapidly: the Japanese version of this game came out in late December (!) with *Wild Arms*.

Wild Arms takes place in the land of Filgaia, a country with rich folklore describing a race of dwarves who were destroyed by an army of metal-skinned



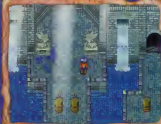
giants. Supposedly, these events took place over 1000 years ago! These tales were thought to be mere legends, until archaeological digs began to unearth incredibly advanced technology like giant mechanical coloms and weapons known as ARMs, or Ancient Relic Machines. Several ARMs turn up, but only a tiny percentage of the population can synchronize with them. One of these people is the 15-year-old Rudy, one of the adventures the people of Filgaia call "Dream Chasers." Joining with fellow adventurers Jack Van Burego, and Cecilia, the closed-princess of Adria, do, are about to embark on a journey that will change the face of their world and force them to learn truth about their personal histories they'd just as soon forget.

Wild Arms is highly derivative of past RPGs, but it pumps some all the right games' action RPG elements like bombs, wire hooks and wheelhoof from *Zelda*, puzzles from *Lufia II*, and battles from *Final Fantasy* in fact, this combat system is so close to *FFVII*'s that it's scary. "three party members," "limit attacks," "summon spirits," etc. All this adds up to an extremely entertaining and much more "anime RPG" engine than what we're used to. Playing *Wild Arms* is just, well, fun. You're not constricted to normal overhead RPG controls.... You can dash, jump from high places, and have lots of movement with all three characters. "Goods."

WILD ARMS KRAZY-KORNER

Wild Arms is an absolutely great game and all, but it contains one serious flaw: just... well, distract me. If you can't tell where's happening below, our intrepid hero Rudy chooses a chicken, which, in case as soon as it hits the ground. What's left behind? A MUSH-ROOM. Darn that not fighter yetz-ah can't teach old chicken to go around hawking food just to give shiny psychotic mental. Forward! Start a letter-writing campaign! Notify your senator!





Ah yes, the "Goods" system. As has been said before in the pages of GameFan, every modern Japanese RPG has to have a few "new systems," which have gotten rather twisted of late ("Tri-Mode No Interruption Free Room System," "Zapping Active Battle Exchange System!" etc., etc.). With fragment disregard for Japanese RPG naming rules, Wild Arms plays it simple with the "Goods System." In concept, however, it's anything but: Each character gains four items unique to them that can be used at any time. For instance, Rudy has bombs, a roller dash, and the Treasure Doll, which allows you to see hidden treasures in towns and such... Needless to say, it's been a very much desire in sight.



ARMS



RPGs? Jack has a lightbulb idea. He was back and his pet was not happy, who can retrieve items or push switches that are beyond previous. Decis has the Targ, which can open specially sealed passages, a watch that can turn back time and a wand that allows her to communicate with animals. The polygonal battles are truly a sight to behold, with beautiful spells and summoned beasts. And they're highly strategic, as well. Unfortunately, once you've experienced Final Fantasy VII's battles, Wild Arms' look... uh... No, I don't carry-out-able. They look less than spectacular. I must confess: Sorry for bashing Wild Arms but before FFVII—I was quite impressed with the Japanese Wild Arms, but the American preview was hard to see after finishing FFVII. Ignore that, though. Most of you won't see FFVII for a few months after Wild Arms comes out, rest assured that these battles are the greatest you've ever seen and will see until September 7th.

The American version of Wild Arms we received was decently translated, with few names changed. It was only playable for about three hours (most of the story is this layout, unfortunately, are from the Japanese version) so expect a much more in-depth look at W4 next issue, perhaps with a review of the final American game. From playing the Japanese one, I can already tell you that Wild Arms will be one of the best RPGs ever released in this country and will fit in the time between Suikoden and FFVII perfectly. **—NR**



PlayStation

W4: Wild Arms

Preview: W4

Issue: 100

For: PSX

Developer: Namco

Release: 1998

WICK WICK
IT'S ALL ABOUT
NAMCO!!!





Gamefen first made the public aware of Core's Swagman way back in Volume 3. Yes, that was quite a while ago, but the game is finally nearing completion. And even though many moons have passed, the graphic prowess of this title still cannot be overlooked.

In Swagman, you take control of Zack or Hannah in their quest to defeat the vile Swagmen and rescue Dream Fly, protector of the happy dreams. Travel through seventeen stages of rendered scenery swapping

characters and doing your best to make it through unscathed. The game really starts to get interesting once you reach the DreamWorld. Here, your characters transform into DreamBeasts and take on a whole new set of powers.

This being a preview, I won't go too in-depth into the actual play mechanics. What I saw looked fairly basic, but was well done. You have the ability to jump, pick up items, swing your flashlight, etc. You're character doesn't zoom around on screen, but it does control well. So I have faith in Core to deliver the gameplay goods. They've generally kept me quite pleased in the past, so I can only hope for the same here. At the very least however, I have seen how this game looks, and it's very impressive.

H
A
N
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C
K



P
PREVIEW



DEVELOPER - CORE

PUBLISHER - LUGGS

FORMAT - CD

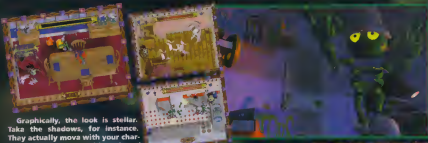
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - 2ND QUARTER '07



SUBSTANCE D
The Swagmen
couldn't



Graphically, the look is stellar. Take the shadows, for instance. They actually move with your character and flow over objects based on the position of the light source. Add to this, magic animation, color, and effects and you have a fine looking game on your hands.

Hopefully Core will imbue this title with gameplay to match its outstanding visu-



als. It certainly looks original and the cool drama premise reminds me of that other surreal masterpiece, Sonic Team's *NIGHTS*. Core certainly has a fine track record thus far, and they've been working on *Swagman* for a long time. Let's hope they spent that time wisely. If so, look for a glowing review as soon as a final version is available. **SD**



BALL BLAZER CHAMPIONS



FIRE THE BURNING HOT 'PLASMORB' INTO THE GOAL! IT'S GOOD!!!!



steal" and special dodges). You're in a giant 3D stadium each time you fight, so learning the layout and practicing your maneuvers is essential.

We haven't had a chance to sit down and take this game apart yet, but more in-depth gameplay information should be coming soon. If everything comes together, *BallBlazer Champions* should be a heck of a comeback classic. **G**



EIGHT ALIEN CHAMPIONS VIE FOR THE TITLE OF MASTER BLAZER!!



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Back in 1985, LucasFilm Games introduced the original *BallBlazer*. Developed for the Atari and Commodore platforms, *BallBlazer* was one of the most advanced games of its time. Just imagine: It's 1985, you're coming off years of intense 4k gaming (it was, anyway, in my little ColecoVision universe), and a futuristic first-person blaster comes along out of nowhere. Players toiled over the ultra-fast-paced 3D experience, vying to attain the coveted rank of 'Master Blazer'.

Now, LucasArts hopes to re-capture the breakthrough classic, with the all-new *BallBlazer Champions* for the PS.

Champions takes place on an artificial asteroid created expressly for the Interstellar BallBlazer Championship. The IBC brings in competitors from across the galaxy—pilots who command powerful hovercraft-like vehicles called "Rotofolls." The IBC committee made

SPLIT-SCREEN MODE FOR TWO PLAYERS!



certain the object of the game was simple: Score more goals than your opponent. Friendly sportsmanship? Not so. The *BallBlazer* universe is perpetually at war, and this tournament replaces the bloodshed with sport over two weeks, every year. Why do they continue to fight? Nobody knows. The network executives need it, the fans love it, and the historians watch on helplessly.

So how do you play? You choose one of 8 champions, customize your Rotofoll, and enter the competition. The ball in this game is the "plasmorb," and Rotofoll energy is required when holding it, when shooting, and when performing various maneuvers (such as the "plasmorb

steal" and special dodges).

You're in a giant 3D stadium each time you fight, so learning the layout and practicing your maneuvers is essential.



BACK US OUT ONLINE AT - <http://www.gametrail.com/>



P
PREVIEW



DEVELOPER: THUNDER 5

PUBLISHER: LUCASARTS

FORMAT: CD

1-ON-1 PLAYERS: 1 AND 2

DIFFICULTY: ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE: THIS FALL ONLY



GLITCH

Another cool classic getting a 32-bit face lift!

56

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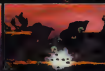


EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK!: BLACK-OP'S UNDERWATER EXTRAVAGANZA: TREASURES OF THE DEEP!

In *Treasures of the Deep* you play the part of Jack Rangan, and ex-Navy Seal turned rogue mercenary who travels the globe on a never-ending search for undersea fortunes. By retrieving treasures you can make money to upgrade your vehicle with new weapons and equipment, which you will need in future operations to stop terrorist Simon Black from detonating the world's undersea fault lines. Your quest will take you to locations like the Bermuda Triangle, the undersea caves of the Yucatan Peninsula, the Mariana Trench, the icy caverns of Antarctica and the shark-infested waters of the Great Barrier Reef. Cool.



ABES ADVENTURE • ODD WORLD INHABITANTS/GTE • ADVENTURE



One of the most unique, and graphically superb adventures perhaps ever, is *Odd World Inhabitants*. Ambitious *Abes Adventure*. The game goes as far as having its own language called "Gama Speak," has generous puzzles and isn't truly comical overtones. It's deep as well, real deep. With any luck we'll have the game in our hands for a preview next month.



HEAVEN'S GATE • ATLUS • FIGHTING • AVAIL. NOW JPN./US TBA



Atlus enters the 3D fighting fray with *Heaven's Gate*, an original fighter which introduces 8 all-new characters. Apart from the typical assortment of options (rounds, life gauge, etc.), *HG* also allows one to alternate the ring-out feature on or off, and includes training and survival (or "Tough Guy") modes. The gameplay is ultra *Virtua Fighter*-esque, including PPKs, a block button, and two-button throws (as well as similar characters). Despite the borrowed themes, *Heaven's Gate* offers great 3D fpe action within highly-detailed 3D arenas and backgrounds, as well as a soundtrack well suited to the Oriental feel. *HG* has yet to be announced for a US release, but it seems inevitable... either way, we'll keep you posted.



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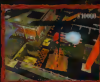
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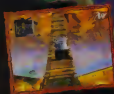
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NINTENDO 64 THEATER



RARE IS PREPARING TO BULLDOZE YOUR SENSES IN SPECTACULAR STYLE!!

BLAST CORPS



In the 21st century, a computer-controlled chemical carrier has malfunctioned and headed off course into a populated area. The chemicals being transported are highly unstable and should the carrier collide with any obstacles, it will explode with the force of a small nuclear weapon. And that would be bad. As a member of the titular Blast Corps—a crack team of demolition experts—it's your job to ensure that the carrier gets a smooth ride through each of the game's 60 levels...by whatever means necessary.

Each level contains a set number of vehicles dotted around the landscape (from a total of around 50) and you must use these vehicles appro-

priately to clear a safe path for the carrier. There are eight main demolition vehicles (each with a different technique for destroying buildings) and around 50 more "auxiliary" vehicles, each with their own utilitarian function. For instance, freight trains and cranes can be used to transport other vehicles to inaccessible areas, while cars and vans are often the fastest way to get from point A to point B. There's even the A-Room van in there somewhere!

Blast Corps is structured around three main global "stages," each containing a set number of levels that must be completed before you can progress to the next stage. There are around 60 levels in total (includ-

ROBOTS CAN SMASH CONCRETE WITH EASE! THREE TOUGH DROIDS TO CHOOSE FROM!





POWERSLIDE THE DUMP TRUCK FOR GREATER DAMAGE! THIS VEHICLE IS TOUGH GOING!

ing a vast number of secret and bonus levels) and the further you get into the game, the more complex your task becomes. Not only do you have to destroy buildings but you have to fill in holes, bridge rivers, transport TNT crates to demolish particularly stubborn structures, and all the while the carrier is closing in.

However, clearing a path for the chemical carrier isn't the only mission in *Blast Corps*. Once a level has been successfully completed you can return to it at any time to attempt one of the secondary objectives. Destroy buildings to earn extra money, or search the landscape for hidden vehicles, Radiation Dispersal Units (which open sub-levels) and six hidden scientists who unlock a secret that's "out of this world." These secrets add an extra layer of depth to the game and keep you playing long past the point of completion.

The graphics are impressive, as you would expect from Rare. The objects themselves aren't that exceptional (the pastel colors seem a bit out of place) but the explosions are cool, the vehicles move realistically and the whole landscape is convincingly portrayed with little slow-down and no clipping. You couldn't do this on any other system. The sound



NEW TACTICS ARE REQUIRED TO SUCCEED WITH THE DUNE BUGGY!

effects are also appropriate enough, while the music is a strange mixture of '70s funk, ambient and barn bance!

But on to the million dollar question: How does the game actually play? Well, I think opinions are going to vary over this one folks, but personally, I really enjoyed *Blast Corps*. I admit a few of the vehicles are way too difficult to control (such as the Back Lash), and the gameplay is fraught with frustration, but overall, I got a real kick out of the whole mass destruction thing. Sure it has its problems, but when it comes down to it, you can't beat a good bit of industrial vandalism once in a while.

Blast Corps is definitely not for everyone. If you're looking for inland gratification in a game, you won't find it here. But if you're looking for something a little different, then *Blast Corps*' unique blend of mass destruction and puzzles may well be just what the doctor ordered. I would say that *Blast Corps* has all the indications of being a sleeper hit, except that every 1996 game released here these days is a guaranteed chart topper (Crash's *USA* was complete poo and that's still on the charts). I guess when you're starving, anything tastes good. **K**

SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVE VEHICLES TO CONTINUE THE CARNAGE! IT'S A BLAST!!



UPDATE



DEVELOPER - RARE
PUBLISHER - NINTENDO
FORMAT - CARTRIDGE

OF PLAYERS - 1
DIFFICULTY - MODERATE
AVAILABLE - APR



KNIGHTMARE
An original game in a RARE thing indeed.



DARK RIFT

If there's one genre the N64 isn't exactly known for, it's 3D fighting games. (Actually, are there any genres it is known for...?) Besides Hudson's *Duo! Heroes*, which hasn't even been announced for an American release, there's nothing. Enter Vic Tokai's *Dork Rift*, a game that was originally announced for the PlayStation but was scrapped due to... shall we say... *differences* with Sony over a lovely little game called *Criticom*.

Though we haven't actually seen the N64 version in motion (at last year's E3 we saw the game running on a PlayStation at 60fps, with motion blurs and multi-layer parallax backgrounds... it was gorgeous, to say the least,) Vic Tokai boasts that it will bestow upon us "blazing frame rates, optical motion capture animation and intense fog mood enhancing." Let's hope that the fog in *Dork Rift* is more, uh, mood enhancing than in other N64 games...

Dork Rift features eight playable characters, two bosses, *Tekken*-like ten-hit combos, side-steps, chain combos, and *KI*-style combo breakers. Little else, such as specifics about what type of special move motions are in the game, is known. We should have a hands-on preview of *Dork Rift* sometime soon. **NR**

P
PREVIEW

NINTENDO 64
N64

DEVELOPER - HUDSON

PUBLISHER - VIC TOKAI

FORMAT - CARTRIDGE

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - N/A



NICK ROX
From the makers of *criticom!* jonyah!

IN DEVELOPMENT



Robotron X for the Nintendo 64 is well under way by the same team that brought us the stellar PS version, *Player One*. We recently made our way to sunny Santa Monica to see what gamers could expect from this classic blaster on the most powerful console in the known universe. As of 2/24 the game was about 70% complete, with all of the graphics and model designs finished, but yet to be placed into the actual game. The N64 version will feature 200 levels, like the PS version, but, according to designer George Welsing, it will feature a few things not found on the PS version as well. These "extras" include a first-person perspective mode, improved enemy AI, dual-analog controller mode (see picture, below), music which

increasingly accelerates toward the end of each level, and best of all, the final level features a yet unseen end boss!

The fourteen techno tracks (completely recomposed from the PS game) use 6-8 sound channels, and at this point, it's already the best we've heard from the N64. As expected, the player's level status, controller configurations and option settings can all be saved to memory card. A jolt pack option may be added also, if the specs are received in time. If all goes well, we should be obtaining a preview copy of *Robotron X* for the next issue, as well as an interview with *Player One*, where we just may learn what they've got in the works following this amazing title.

The Enquirer



Pictured above: Left, a demonstration of the two-handed technique; Center, a demo shot of *Robotron X*; Right, a sample of rendered art, which may be used as the cover for the packaging.



PREVIEWS!

NINTENDO 64



TITLE HEIKEN
COMPANY ST. NINTENDO
ETA MAY, JPN. - AUG. US
GENRE 3D CORRIDOR

Heiken, due in June (USA), is the first corridor game to feature 2 or 4 player multi-screen carnage.

The game is also a lot cleaner graphically than its PS and SS counterparts. We should have a *bone a-rde* hands on preview for you next month. This great corridor game will be a welcome sight indeed.



TITLE GORMAN & GORMAN
COMPANY NINT. JPN. - 4TH Q. US
ETA NINTENDO, JPN. - 4TH Q. US
GENRE ACTION/PLAT. ORIENTED ADVENTURE

Finally, some actual screens (as opposed to the mock ups we've been getting) of *Gorman & Gorman*. The engine looks very "if-it-a-mot" but the gameplay should be quite unique. Look for a more platform-oriented adventure. *G5* is due in Japan this May, with a US version probably around Christmas.



The next big event for the N64 is definitely *StarFox 64*. If the Nintendo 64's 3D capabilities are to be tested, this will be the ultimate testing ground. The game features "me-to" levels similar to the original along with "go anywhere" levels where you and the crew fight free of directional restraints. *StarFox 64* also features split-screen play for up to 4 players in battle mode and ground assaults. The game is 56 megs big and blessed by Miyamoto and his crack squad of designers and artists. *StarFox* lands in Japan this April and here this June.

TITLE STARFOX 64
COMPANY NINTENDO
ETA APRIL, JPN. - JUNE US
GENRE SHOOTER

The latest on *Zelda* is news that the game will now be introduced in cart form (124m) and then new scenarios will be introduced which will attach to the quest via 64DD. Look for *Zelda 64* this Summer in Japan and later this year in the USA.

SATURN SECTOR

LUNACY

I can't tell you what a delight it is to see a game like this reach the shores of the red, white, and blue. It's almost as if an evil conspiracy has been bent on keeping the more esoteric and interesting Japanese games from our waiting hands. Somehow, Lunacy made it.

Some of you may recall seeing the Japanese version of this game (called Torico) a little while ago in the pages of GameFan. In the interim, the game has received a shiny new English voice track, allowing the game to be enjoyed by all English-speaking humans of the world.

You play Fred, a poor soul who's memory was lost four years ago. Since then, you have been wanderer from village to village searching for your true identity, along with the meaning of the strange carved tattoo on your forehead. As Lunacy opens, you find yourself in a mysterious village known as Misty Town. You quickly discover that the only way you can leave Misty Town and regain your memory is by finding the echerat (City of Mount Bo-Lunacy) begins.

In the tradition of War's inspired D, Lunacy is all streamlined FMV. In other words, you move around within the

game world in spurts from one "hot" spot to the next. Of course, a level 44-control is removed from the player's hands, but the upshot of it is a beautifully realized and detailed environment—much more so than would be possible if it were all real time. Everything in life is a compromise of sorts, I suppose. But I can live with that, for the look and atmosphere of this game is just wonderful. Misty Town is lit in a melan-

choly dusk, the setting sun painting everything orange. The game is even more beautiful taking once you reach the City of Moons. Here the color palette is cool, with great, dreamlike bridges and pools of water. Even with the Saturn's lack of prowess with FMV (which is surprisingly well handled here), the game looks fantastic.

As far as the gameplay is concerned, there is less puzzle solving than D. It's mostly about finding items and then finding the proper place to use them. There's nothing terribly tricky or taxing. It's simply a matter of looking everywhere and speaking to everyone. Certain items won't appear unless a particular conversation has been triggered. This may stump you a couple of times.

In the music department, Lunacy benefits from a beautiful, distinctly Japanese sound-track. As much as the actual look of the game, the music soaks the environment in atmosphere. It's a really great, soothing score that suits the mood of the game perfectly. As for the dubbing, the voice quality is fine, though the translation and delivery are a bit odd at times. Revel in phrases like,

"This town is a nut farm. I'm getting the hell out of here," or, "The name that they call me is Fred."

If you thought D was the best of times, Lunacy is right up your alley. The FMV is

supremely well done, the music's gorgeous and the story is nice and surreal.

On the other hand, you may not like FMV games, and if that's the case, you'll probably won't chase your mind as Lunacy's on behalf. Certainly it's not the best of games you can play over and over. SD



**R
REVIEW**

SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER: TESA OF JAPAN

PUBLISHER: ATLUS

FORMAT: 2 CDs

OF PLAYERS: 1 PLAYER

DIFFICULTY: INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE: NOW



SUBSTANCE D
THE NAME THAT
THEY CALL ME
IS FRED.

THOSE WACKED-OUT VIKINGS ARE LOST AGAIN!!

three Vikings, you can't see the level exit. Naturally, as you progress, the level exit. Naturally, as you progress, the more and more tricky to crack.

As would be expected, the graphics have been upgraded, though not as much as they could have been, considering the strength of the Saturn's 2-D abilities. Though the backgrounds are nicely colored and detailed, there is but one scroll. It would look so much better with some of the deep parallax I know the Saturn is capable of. To my eyes, it doesn't look all that much better than some thing like *Donkey Kong Country*, and that game had some pretty deep scrolling. But don't get the impression that I am at odds with this game. I'm merely pointing out that I feel the graphics could be of a little better quality, not that there's anything wrong with them. On the flip side, the audio sensations are sure to please. The music is beautifully composed and fits the pacing of the game generally well. Interplay has generally had a good

However, graphics aside, this game remains true to the original's formula, which means that it's additive and fun. And, in an effort to add something new, there are now additional characters you get to control in certain levels. You still have three characters at your command, but one or more of the Vikings will be replaced by an animal player. There's the wolf, who has the ability to jump endlessly up walls and swipe at enemies, and the little dragon, who can fly for a short time (he gets tired, the poor little feller) and shoot fire.

endlessly up walls. You can't fly for a short time (you're a dragon, who can fly for a short time). You'll definitely get a poor little feller) and shoot fire.

If you liked the original *Lost Vikings*, you'll definitely get a kick out of this update, especially in two player co-op mode. The graphics won't blow you away and there isn't a whole lot new, but the puzzles will once again have you scratching your head. Anyone new to *Lost Vikings* will like this if they prefer to think rather than blast their way through a level. I say it's good fun.

SD

level. I say it's good time. 50

**FORMAT - 01**

RESEARCH DESIGN



SUBSTANCE D
WERNY, WERNY,
BEWNY, SHINERNY,
MOOK! MOOK!

KONAMI'S CLASSIC HITS THE SATURN!

CONTRA

legacy of war

Some of my fondest gaming memories stem from my experience with the old NES *Contra*. Images of that game still flow freely throughout my synaptic pathways. We're a long way from 8-bit these days, and you would expect a 32-bit version of a classic NES side-scroller to be beyond awesome. By all rights, it should be. It would seem, however, that Konami dropped the ball on this one. If you were hoping for the classic *Contra* experience, be prepared to be a little disappointed.

Their first mistake in updating the classic *Contra* series was a fatal one. For some unfathomable reason, this game was not even developed in-house by Konami. It was instead farmed out to Appaloosa Software. Why such a hallmark of Konami's past would



be put into the hands of someone else will forever evade my intellectual grasp. It just shouldn't be.

Some of you may have played the PlayStation version that preceded this one. This is essentially the same game. The frame rate is a bit smoother, but the textures are of lower quality. The fact that I am even speaking of textures is the first tip-off that something is not right here. *Contra*, and the style of play that it encompasses, was never meant to be in 3D. I appreciate progress and all, but if Konami wanted to make a 3D ground-based shooter, they should have done something original instead of tarnishing the *Contra* name.

Still, I could accept a 3D *Contra* if it was incredibly well done, but this game comes nowhere near incredibly well done. Perhaps most maddening is the atrocious collision detection. Something that should be intuitive and enjoyable,



like jumping up to a platform, becomes an exercise in frustration. Couple the poor collision with the sloppy Joe control and you're in for a hair-pulling, controller-throwing, "great" time. And speaking of bad control, something else that should be intuitive, like strafing, is handled in a way as to cause even more frustration. Instead of holding one of the shoulder buttons to strafe, you are required to click it once to activate it and click it again to deactivate it. With bullets coming at you from all angles, this is not fun. Playing the game should be the challenge, not wrestling with the control. And while I'm on the subject of challenge, I must point out the extreme difficulty of this game. The *Contra* series has always been about being hard, but this one is hard in an artificial way. When you die, you don't blame yourself, as in a

good game. Instead, you curse the erratic control and murky collision.

Take a break at the arcade with a couple of **HIDDEN GAMES!**



In addition, the characters you can choose from are lame and completely out of place in the *Contra* universe. They're more like characters from the European Prohoteor version. Even the character select screen is cheesy. Each character has a terrible looking, American-style animation that does nothing more than slow down your ability to scroll through and select your on-screen persona.

Surely there must be some things good about this game, you may say. Well, there are. The music's actually pretty good. Oh, and there are some decent boss encounters and a couple of cool little hidden games. Well, they aren't that hidden, but they are a nice diversion nonetheless.

I could see the reasoning behind doing a 3D version for PlayStation, as it is a Sony directive to work in 3D as much as possible. Of course, that's no excuse, but at least there's some kind of reasoning behind it, flawed though it may be. But on a 2D powerhouse such as the Sega Saturn, I can only dream of the lush, sprite filled, and intense shooting scroller Konami could've done. **SD**



DEVELOPER - APPALOGA

OF PLAYERS - CO

PUBLISHER - KONAMI

DIFFICULTY - HARD

FORMAT - CD

AVAILABLE - MARCH '97



SUBSTANCE D
I KNOW, IF YOU
CAN'T SAY SOMETHING GOOD...

TWO-PLAYER BATTLE ACTION THROUGH A CAPTURED L.A. OFFICE TOWER! WELCOME TO THE PARTY, PAL!

FIGHT UNIQUE VILLAINS
THROUGH 5 STAGES WITH
MULTIPLE LEVELS!



INCREDIBLE FIGHT TECHNIQUES—OVER 1,000
CHARACTER ANIMATIONS! 30 DIFFERENT ENEMIES!

While, for the most part, 32-bit technology has meant a marked improvement in most game genres, there is one type of game that seems to have resisted the advance: the side-scrolling beat-'em-up. I'm a big fan of the genre (*Final Fight* and *Streets Of Rage 2* rule), and it pains me that I can count the number of decent PS-and Saturn-scrolling beat-'em-ups on one hand... with no fingers. It's a sad state of affairs when the 32-bit genre leader is the distinctly average *Rainbow Forever*.



able to include real-time cut-scenes, and best of all, an interactive camera system that intelligently zooms and pans to frame the action. The overall aesthetic quality is highly impressive, and it really gives you the feeling that you're playing a 'grows up' beat-'em-up—sort of *Final Fight* meets *Virtua Fighter*.

DIE HARD Arcade

But wait! Hope is on the horizon (well, for Saturn owners at least). Sega has finally gotten around to releasing AM1's smash ST-V hit *Dynasty Wars* in the States, albeit under a new name: *Die Hard Arcade*. As with previous ST-V games, it's an arcade-perfect conversion (except for the CD loading), and as anyone who's played the coin-op will know, that's definitely good news.

So what makes *Die Hard Arcade* so special? Well, for one thing, it's 3D. Ok, so that's not that special, but I think it's a first for a beat-'em-up of this kind. Admittedly the polygons per character isn't that high, but the environments are fully 3D, the textures are clean and there's never any slow-down, no matter how many enemies are on-screen (normally a lot). Because of the polygon visuals, AM1 has been

The VF connection isn't just limited to the graphics

either. Some of DMG's moves are taken directly from VF (e.g. Wolf's Giant Swing, Kage's uppercut) while the basic gameplay has a real VF feel. The recovery times and collision detection aren't as harsh as VF, but a lot of the moves are executed in a similar fashion—i.e., PPK-derivative combos as opposed to just furiously tapping the buttons.

At first *Die Hard Arcade* seems almost unreasonably difficult, but as with most AM games, delve a bit deeper and you'll soon discover that there's more depth than meets the eye. There are combos to be learned, throws to be perfected and mastering the basic mechanics of combat is a real challenge.



USE PUNCHES, KICKS, THROWS AND HEAVY ARTILLERY TO DEFEAT THE TERRORISTS!



But, hey, not that challenging. After all, *Die Hard Arcade* is a beat-'em-up, and beat-'em-ups are all about fun. It may take a bit longer to get into than your usual Capcom fist-fest, but the premise is still the same: pound everyone! You and a friend face a seemingly un-ending barrage of thugs, ninjas, robots and gun-toting perps as you travel through a variety of cool environments in your bid to save the President's daughter. You're not just limited to your fists either: Literally anything you can see can be used as a weapon: furniture, brooms, broken bottles, pepper shakers, axes, swords, chairs, anything! However, by far the



COMBINE PUNCHES AND KICKS TO
CREATE POWERFUL NEW ATTACKS!
YIPPEE-KAI-AY, MUDDY FUNSTER!

most effective weapons are the guns.

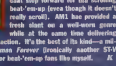
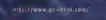
Now there have been beat-'em-ups with guns before but never anything quite this excessive. Whether it's a Beretta, an M4K, a rocket launcher or even an anti-tank gun (which really has no business being in a beat-'em-up), the feeling you get from mercilessly panning down your enemy before they can even lay a finger on you is hugely satisfying. You can store up to five clips at once, and it's possible to complete whole sections of the game just by laying down some John Woo-style gunfire.

Die Hard Arcade is not perfect. The graphics are occasionally glitchy, and more seriously, the whole experience is way too short. You can earn yourself almost unlimited credits by scoring on the accompanying 8-bit Deep Scan game (naming credits, now there's a thought!), thus making it possible to blunder through the



CLOSE ON THE ENEMY AND USE THE GRAB ATTACK!

GET IN RANGE THEN EXECUTE A POWERFUL GRAB TECHNIQUE! 15 THROWS TO CHOOSE FROM!



whole game on your first go. Personally I enjoy seeing how far I can get on just one credit (big finishing move from *Virtua Cop 2*), but if you're the kind of gamer who feels they've beaten a game once they've completed it, you'll probably want to look elsewhere.

Still, there's no denying that *Die Hard Arcade* represents a significant step forward for the scrolling beat-'em-up (even though it doesn't really scroll). AM1 has provided a fresh slant on a well-worn genre while at the same time delivering some good, solid, old school action. It's the best of its kind—a million times better than *Batman Forever* (ironically another ST-V game)—and a heaven send for beat-'em-up fans like myself. **K**

R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER - SEGA
PUBLISHER - SEGA
FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE
AVAILABLE - TRY QUANTUM '97



KNIGHTMARE
A 'grown up' beat-'em up!



WHEN YOU WANT SOMETHING DEAD, A GUN IS AS CLOSE AS THE NEAREST VENDING MACHINE. BUT WHEN YOU WANT SOMETHING DEAD AND YOU'RE NOT UP TO THE JOB YOU WANT A SCUD.



Scud

THE DISPOSABLE ASSASSIN

Unless you frequent the intriguing world of underground comics, you've probably never heard of SCUD. A SCUD, by definition, is a disposable assassin (hence the title). If you want something dead but don't wanna get your hands dirty, you need only visit your local SCUD vending machine. As our story begins, Herschel, who's being held responsible for the mad robot SCUD calls 'JEFF' which is loose in the mannequin factory (it slams one kid into the ground and then slaps him bursting and gushing against the screen, then rips another in half), deploys a SCUD to take care of business. This SCUD, however, has overridden its programming and has a will to live. Nominally, a SCUD self-

Pavlov, Nathan Twist... even The Head of Jayne Mansfield... They all found SCUD and they all got killed.



R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER - SIGAFOOT

IF BE PLAYED - 1, 2

PUBLISHER - SEGA

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

FORMAT - CD

AVAILABLE - MARCH



E. STORM
I could really use one of those SCUDs...



destructs after its 1st kill. But instead of killing its targets, the SCUD seriously wounds them and then keeps them alive on life support. Of course, this costs money, and so SCUD must offer his services as an assassin for hire, in order to stay alive.

Meanwhile, ASGARD (the evil corporation in our adventure) wants SCUD eliminated and so, our noodle-headed vian (see intro shots opposite page) sends out the fearsome 'AM minus 2' to do away with the runaway robot. All of this is set up and maintained brilliantly throughout the game via some high-quality (funny, too) FMV sequences.

SCUD can be played by one or two players, one with a gun or mouse, while the other controls SCUD with a pad, or, by one player with standard controls (jump, kick, duck, and shoot) or just the gun. I can't stand 2-player action or gun games so I braved it on my own.

The 2D sequences take place on beautifully rendered & animated backgrounds and consist of mild platforming and non-stop shooting. SCUD can shoot the enemies' shots, but they shoot high and low at a fever pitch, so this isn't as simple as it sounds. SCUD can also swipe enemies at close range, which produces a slightly peezy close

Poly-steroid armor and a month's battery supply... SCUD wants more life...

up encounter. When SCUD switches to the 3D gun mode

(FMV backgrounds with nicely animated sprites coming directly at the player) SCUD zips back and a crosshair appears. A diverse element, yes, but a fun one... well, perhaps for some. I've never liked gun games and so this is a feature I can live without.

For the most part SCUD is a basic side-scroller laced with rendered characters, digitized explosions, generous parallax, gruesome hits, and a truly likeable hero. Bosses are big but pixily and, for the most part, very easy to kill when compared to the challenge the levels themselves dish out. The soundtrack is of the rising industrial sort and ranges from good to pass-the-ear-plugs.

It's when you combine the solid 2D, pixelable 3D, unique 2-player function, and excellent FMV, that SCUD begins to take shape. SegaSoft has a few screws to tighten before SCUD's ready for a review and I wait with angst for the finished product. 2D after all is the SS's strong point so (SCUD should) begin to fill a gap that you could drive a Humvee through.

ES SATURN Preview



Capcom's mech based 3-D fighter is on its way to the Saturn as we speak, and as you can see, Capcom has added some new characters! That Akuma gets around eh. CB has a March release date in Japan, so expect a US version this Summer-3rd Qtr.

DUKE NUKEM

This is the one I'm waiting for. The Saturn programming guru at Lobotomy are currently in the process of converting the PC first person shooter Duke Nukem 3D to the Saturn. It's commonly acknowledged as one of the greatest Doom-style games



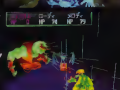
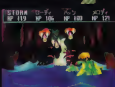
ever made, and in single player mode it's even more enjoyable than the mighty Quake (which Lobotomy is also converting to the Saturn). No word yet on how much of the sex and violence will remain intact.

MANX TT Super Bike



GREAT NEWS!!

Those of you who tuned in to my import review of Shining last month may have noticed how irked I was that Sega (at the time) hadn't considered it for US release. Without going too much into detail let me simply proclaim that my rant was not in vain. SOA started localization shortly thereafter and the game is now set for a Summer release here in the US. Simply one of the finest Sega RPGs ever, Shining will surely begin to make up for the inexcusable lack of Japanese software making its way stateside. Things will hopefully continue along this path in the future. I'll have a US preview and be able to comment on the US translation in the May issue.





CRUNCHERS



A w yeah baby, *Mortal Kombat* is back, and this time it's making a leap bigger than any of its predecessors. MK4 is currently around 35% complete and is scheduled for release in either June or July, although setting is final. There is no story yet, but when asked if there were any new gameplay features, such as MK3's Run button, MK programmer and producer Ed Boon replied, "None better? Not a new mode at gameplay? Yeah!" We know MK4 is 3D, but as to how much this will affect the way the game plays is unknown at present. What we do know is that MK's trademark finishing moves (Fatalities, Scissorbees, etc.) are out. As Boon stated, "MK4 will not feature any of MK's trademark cartoon finishing moves because we want the game to be much darker and scarier."

Gameplay changes aside, the other major advancement in MK4 is the hardware. The game now runs on a 64-bit system entitled "Zelus." The hardware was designed by Williams tech wizard Mark Lotfrevi, the man behind every piece of Williams hardware since *Nova*. Zeus draws about

1.2 million polygons a second with all features on; i.e. shading, anti-aliasing, head-movement, light scattering... the works! Take a look at the shots on this page... They aren't from any rendered CG. They're real game shots!

MK4's cast of 12 warriors includes the return of Rayden, Sub-Zero, Liu Kang, Scorpion, and possibly Sonya, with the rest composed entirely of new characters. The game uses approximately 2,000 to 3,000 polygons per character at 60 frames per second, with detailed real-time 3D backgrounds. You should be able to recognize the background in these shots—it's from *Goro's Lair*. Does this mean the return at *Goro*? Only Time and Boon know and they're not saying...

Finally, we have some news on the home version of MK4. Both the N64 and PS versions are scheduled for a release later this year, though how a conversion of such powerful hardware will be accomplished is still a mystery.



There's a last-second update on the AOU show, Japan's premier arcade game exhibition, which was held at Makuhari Messe in Chiba on 2/18 and 2/19. First assured, we'll have a full AOU report in the next issue of GameFan. The '97 AOU was a somewhat subdued one, with few huge announcements other than SNK's Neo-Geo 64. Sega had three games: *House of the Dead*, an impressive Model 3 shooter, *Top Gun*, a skateboarding game, and *Virtua Soccer 2*, a Model 3 soccer game. Namco's booth was somewhat disappointing with *Tekken 3* and *Alpine Racer 2*, both of which had already been

seen, and *Amadillo Racing*, an innovative racing game controlled with a trackball. Karate debuted their new driving game *Jam Racer*, which ran on their 5,000,000-polygon-per-second Cohen hardware. Show floor reports say *Jam Racer* makes *Scud Race* look like a toy, but only time will tell. Karate also had the innovative *Hang Pilot*, a hang-gliding game with two screens—one ahead and one below you—to simulate a full 3D view. Taizo was showing a brief demo of *Psychic Force 2* running on their new Taizo Wolf 3D hardware, but, unfortunately, no pictures were allowed. Capcom, in my opinion, had the best showing: *Street Fighter III*, *Vampire Savior*, and *Battle Circuit*. VS is the latest game in the ultra-popular (in Japan, at least) *Vampire* series. There's not much room to go into detail about it here, but expect a full preview next issue. SFW needs no introduction, and *Battle Circuit* was a cool, comical side-scrolling beat-'em-up in the *Final Fight* tradition.

Each year Japanese arcade magazine *Gamest* polls all corners to the show on what their favorite games were. The rankings were as follows: 1.) *Vampire Savior*, 2.) *Tekken 3*, and 3.) *Street Fighter III*. Look for more AOU next month!



SNK'S NEW SPIRIT IN NEO-GEO 64

The most surprising announcement at the AOU came in the form of SNK's new 64-bit hardware, the Neo-Geo 64. A video of *Samurai Spirits Neo-Geo 64* was unveiled.



Details on the game were few and far between, but it appears there are four new characters, one of which looks suspiciously like Ryo Aoyama from the popular *Extraction* series. *Samurai* is at an extremely early level of development, but expect more on SNK's 64 next issue! This is the only game in which you can "embody fierce champions in parallel 3-D worlds," so be prepared!



SNK's incredible hardware Band of Fighters. Yes, they're mannequins. The Samurai Spirits Neo-Geo 64 display. Godlike standouts at the Capcom booth. I must own these!

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The town: Derby, England. The weather: Freezing. The Mission: Interrogate the rest of the Core Development staff to find out some of the company's plans for 1997 and beyond. The Game: Judgement Force. The Results: Even more informative shenanigans from the world of Core Design.



The men of Judgement Force, currently beavering away on what could be the best fighting action title since *Streets of Rage*. From left to right: Mac Avory (Programmer), David Long (Programmer) and Roberto Cirillo (Artist).

Core have three more top titles planned for this year: *Swagman* (see elsewhere in this issue), *Ninja* and *Judgement Force*. Being rather partial to a spot of kiltcut action, I headed down to the catacombs housing the gentlemen responsible for *Judgement Force*. Here's what they had to say about the best-looking polygon punch-up game yet seen...

CM: So this is the fighting game. What is the actual title?
TJF (Team Judgement Force): *Judgement Force* is the working title.

CM: And you've been working on it for at least ten months?
TJF: Probably a bit less. Obviously, it's because it's the sort of game we haven't done before; we're just trying to work it all out.

CM: It's going to be released on three platforms? PC, Saturn, and PlayStation?
TJF: Yup.

CM: Which is the most complete version?
TJF: The Saturn version.

CM: What sort of inspiration did you take? I mean, did you look at stuff like *Tekken 2* or *Street Fighter*—do you have any influences?
TJF: The old, the good old *Streets of Rage*, and the new fighting games. It's basically taking a game like *Streets of Rage* and combining with all of the 3D games.

CHIEF HAMBLETON TOUR OF DUTY PART 2: ANOTHER AUDIENCE WITH CORE DESIGN!



"Core" Bilmey. If it ain't me old muckers from across the pond. Knock me down if this 'ere Europa special don't feature more of them there blokes from Core. Are you gawping?

CM: Is it more of a walk along, rather than sort of a set fight?
TJF: Yeah. Yeah, you progress on to the next situation in an ongoing scenario.

CM: How many fighters are there going to be, do you think?
TJF: We prefer the term 'contestants'. Four are available.

CM: So this is more like a sort of *Streets of Rage* in 3D?
TJF: Yup.

CM: At the moment, approximately how many polygons is each character made up of?
TJF: We're trying to keep the characters down to between 150 and 300.

CM: What's the sort of plot behind this... do you have one yet?
TJF: We kind of had one but we couldn't use it. It's definitely the good guys versus the bad guys.

CM: Would you say you took a lot of influence for this from *Final Fight* and *Die Hard* Arcade?
TJF: Yeah, you really have to go back and look at the older games and see what made them work. Then add dramatically to it. It's a completely different game than *Die Hard*—you can't really compare them. You can't say they are both directional 3D games, because *Die Hard* really isn't a 3D game.

CM: How many of you are involved in the game's creation, how big is the team?
TJF: Round about four at the moment.

CM: The backgrounds are 2D sort of scrolling, would you say?
TJF: Well yeah, the really far away backgrounds are 2D.

CM: How many moves per character do you think there will be?
TJF: About 35, so far.

CM: How many levels are there going to be?
TJF: Maybe a dozen, without loads of power ups and huge zones to explore.

CM: When do you think we'll see a version in the States? Probably April or May?
TJF: Maybe later. We're planning a Summer release.

CM: The time had come for me to leave. I thanked my gracious hosts, and waited anxiously for the games to be finished. *Judgement Force*, and another game called *Ninja* (both of which were in very early stages of development) looked to be very exciting games indeed. The next year should see Core propelled to the forefront of video games development, and rightly so. Not only does Core have some of the best programmers and artists in the business, but the nicest bunch of people you're ever likely to meet. GameFon waits for the final products with giddy anticipation.

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CONTEST RULES

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. To enter send a standard postcard containing your name, address, phone number and age to "K-1 The Arena Fighters Contest" c/o T-MQ, 5016 North Parkway Coliseum, Suite 100, Coliseum, California 95822. Limit one entry per Participant. Entries must be received by May 15th, 1997. All entries become the exclusive property of T-MQ/GAMEFAN magazine (sponsors) and will not be acknowledged or returned. Sponsors assume no responsibility for lost, undelivered, late, illegible, incomplete, postage due or misdirected entries. Drawing will be held on or about May 20th, 1997.

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GAMEFAN



SPORTS



HOCKEY

EA's Mask-erade Celebration

Once again, EA shows the sports game industry why their motto is, "It's in the Game." It's not enough to just make a fake game anymore, but rather an all-encompassing experience. In their never-ending search for individualism and the cutting edge, EA may have opened up another portfolio to the sports-games world beyond. Chip Lange, Director of Sports Marketing says quite simply, "EA's goal is to find ways to differentiate us from the rest."

About 3 years ago, the competitive started to catch on to all of the NHL/NHLPA licensing, an aspect of sports games that was used exclusively by EA before then. EA found themselves forced to brainstorm for new and interesting ideas. Took them, the helmets in EA's NHL series were plain white. "How cool would it be to have the actual helmet designs of each goalie?" they pondered. After researching the matter, they found that the masks were in essence by the NHL, but rather by a group based out of Santa Monica, called Five Hole. The two companies put a deal together, and came to an agreement that allowed EA to have the helmet designs in their game.

What happened from there may be termed "a stroke of luck." The game developers discovered they needed actual, physical renditions of each helmet in order to accurately, capture 3-D, rendered helmets in the game. Five Hole got busy the following 6 months, producing 50 full-sized helmets for EA; then, because EA the proud owner of the largest collection of goalie masks in the world, EA proceeded to show-her this collection on trade shows around the country, including the Electronic EA. What they discovered was a wildly popular reaction to the collection, and a huge parade of requests.

Naturally, to say, EA was thrilled at this response and subsequently introduced their "Slammy Cup Collection"—a collection of memorabilia items of the last 5 Stanley Cup winning teams (New Jersey Devils, Colorado Avalanche, New York Rangers, Florida Panthers, and Montreal Canadiens). Why the hype over a hockey mask? Unlike football helmets or basketball caps, the hockey masks are highly individualized, often reflecting not only the team's city or mascot, but sometimes even the goalie's very own personality. The reason for this lies in the fact that each goalie contracted out and worked with their very own artist, and worked together to cultivate these visions onto the helmets. Plains of individualism can be seen on helmets like Florida's "Biker," who sports a large, yellow "B" on his helmet or Boston like the New York Rangers, who created a new-kind, third Jersey that is based on events like Boston's Statue of Liberty head, mask design.

All 5 of these miniatures masks are available through EA now, and some players of each one are included with each copy of NHL 97. 3D more masks will be available by September, just in time for the holidays, including: Hochellai of Chicago, Leveine of Pittsburgh, Bouchard of Vancouver and 13 others.

To order, call EA's Hockey Mask Hotline at: 1-800-245-4525.



KIDD'S CORNER



ACCLAIM "Shines on All-Star Weekend"

Now, if you've ever seen the movie, "Midnight Express," you would have brightening and ghostly misperceptions of the country called Turkey. Because upon visiting the land, you would find that it is as beautiful and vastly enjoyable as a Thanksgiving Dinner. Well, quite sometimes ago, Howard Cassel stated the endearing term "Midstate by the Lake" is referenced in Cleveland, Ohio. As I boarded the plane on my way to Cleveland, all the dreary images of the snow-covered Dowag Point, and snow-covered shoveling into the grey, tumultuous sky filled my mind. If I weren't with a massive hoop line, I may not have found the message to make the journey that Acclaim had so generously provided for me.

Well in my surprise, I fell into a city bustling with life, from the dramatic "architectural structures and art pieces downtown, to the wildly popular restaurants and nightclubs in the Flats. They should have called the city the Stars full of Stars—well, on this weekend, at least. Two feet to the right of me was Kevin McHale... Whoa! Swing around, there goes Dr. L., that really Bill Russell over there?... Excuse me, Mr. Chamberlaine, may I have your autograph?... I just want to get one more photo with Rick Barry... So Larry, what really the greatest?

Everywhere we went, we were bumping into Grant Hill, sitting across from ESPN's Mike Tirico or chatting with Leslie Visser. NBA Jam Session was hyped with 3-on-3 tournaments, 7, 8 and 9 foot rims for slammin', sports card vendors galore, various games and contests for prizes, and Acclaim's very own 500 square foot NBA Jam booth—what a sight to behold. Acclaim packed it in with a multitude of PlayStation and television monitors, as head-to-head competition took place everywhere you turned. Kids and grown-up alike tested their skills, and entered the NBA Jam tournament that started with hundreds, and ended with one. Acclaim-boosted visits by Desmond Howard, Antonio Freeman, Marlon Wayne, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar and more. All participated in the fun and games, but the contestants in the tournament took their Jam seriously, because the winner would walk away with the grand prize—a 50000 NBA Jam coin off of their own. When it was all said and done, the event-freaks received prize packages of games, tickets and apparel, totaling over an estimated \$5000 apiece. The runner-up to the grand prize received a package even more loaded, estimated around \$1000.

One of the evening highlights of the weekend for me however, was meeting with the Acclaim crew as well as several of the sports editors from other magazines. The reason I wanted to make such an impact on me is that just like my misconceptions of Cleveland, Acclaim proved me wrong on many of my Big Company stereotypes. Mike Jaworski, Assistant Product Manager, explained, "I'm not going to lie to you, we've had a rough year.... What Mike was referring to was the reputation of mediocrity that Acclaim's sports titles had earned over the years. He went on to explain how sports games had always taken a backseat before, and how Jam was treated like King, while all the others were timeshare orphaned. He then went on to demonstrate how a new emphasis and priority was being placed on sports, to terms of concentrating on licensing, getting top-rated sports figures like Brett Favre and Shawn Kemp to endorse their products, building a \$100 million million capture studio of their own, as evidenced that even WB used it to film parts of Space Jam, and even increasing their budget for sports product to an enormous \$20 million.

But aside from these revolutionary and cutting edge changes, the thing that struck me was the sincerity of this Acclaim crew. Here is a heavy-hitting, big-time interactive entertainment company basically saying, "We've screwed up, and we want your help to improve, and who better to ask, but the guys who make reviewing sports games a career? What they got was a downpour of sports game input, from years and years of gaming experience, dating back to the days of Intellivision and Atari to the unveiling of N64, from collectors of baseball cards to the most die-hard of Warriors fans. The results were extraordinary not only in feedback, but the relationships that were built, because of one simple fact—game editors WANT good games to review, and would love nothing more than an opportunity to help make that happen. They're the first company I've been in contact with that has actually been gracious enough to ask for help—not a guise pretending to ask what I liked about certain games, but simply a humble, yet wise request.

On more than one occasion, various game developers approached me to discuss new ideas, and my thoughts on how to execute them. Acclaim took the time, amidst one of the busiest events of the year to discuss improving their product. They adapted me on the four points of obtaining licensing, the obscurities of the nation capstone process as well as the industry as a whole—no condescension, not once. You may wonder why I share this side of the business with you, and my reason is to show you that sometimes there are forces and motives within those big, nameless corporations. JK

Joe Kidd can be e-mailed at: rls@metropoliamedia.com

COMING THIS YEAR BY ACCLAIM!



Wall hockey fans, I've seen the future in hockey games. *NHL Breakaway '98* should get a standing ovation from all of you. You will experience the most features of any hockey game available, including: Hi-Res 3-D, polygonal, motion-captured graphics that don't take away from the tempo of the action, a Momentum-Based Chocking System that is determined by players' weights and speed, Playbook-Based AI that sets up actual plays from the designated teams, Variable Player Sizes based on real physical attributes, Non-Stick Hender Control, a Total Team Management System in which you receive points which are applied toward improving year coaching, player development, and injury therapy, Icon Peeling, Create Players that sport their new names on their jersey, World Teamament Teams, including USA, Canada and Russia, Full Season Stat-Tracking, Multiple Season Play, AI-based trades, and advanced coaching strategies as well... You better believe this hockey game means business. It's licensed by the NHL, NHLPA and STATS, Inc.

Formats: PlayStation, Sega Saturn, and Windows '95 **Players:** 1-8 **Available:** August 1997



On January 22, 1997 Acclaim made another advancement toward the top, when they announced the signing of Super Bowl MVP Brett Favre to endorse their *NFL Quarterback Club '98*. Upon the announcement, Favre proclaimed, "It's an honor to be selected as Acclaim's featured quarterback.... and I look forward to working with the Acclaim sports team to create the best football game ever." Needless to say, Acclaim was ecstatic over the signing, but know it takes a lot more than a big name to make the game. *QB Club '98* will have all 30 NFL teams, with corresponding 3D rendered stadiums and over 1500 players! You will have exclusive in-game profiles and game tips from the quarterbacks themselves. You like the 'Niners? Well now you can pre-program your entire sequence of opening offensive plays, just like they do. Players' injuries will affect game and season performances as well. Stat tracking over the entire season will include league leaders in 9 different categories. And all this complete with Marv Albert calling the play by play.

Formats: PlayStation, Sega Saturn, DOS CD-ROM **Players:** 1-6 **Available:** August 1997



Spring training is upon us and not a moment too soon, as Acclaim's *All-Star Baseball '97* (featuring MVP Frank Thomas) is about to hit the shelves. This '98 title will feature all 28 teams, logos and 3D rendered stadiums—even the new 1996 expansion teams, the Arizona Diamondbacks and Tampa Bay Devil Rays. Frank Thomas got personal, by involving himself in the Motion Capture Animations. He is not alone in this game, as you will have over 700 MLB players to pick up or trade for. *All-Star* features the complete 1997 MLB schedule, and offers full season stat-tracking as well. 6 gameplay modes are offered: Exhibition, Season, Playoffs, All-Star, Betting Practice and Home Run Derby. If you're familiar with ESPN's award winning baseball voice, Jon Miller, also of the San Francisco Giants... or should I say, if you're familiar with the game of baseball... Well, Acclaim has brought Miller aboard for the fraa-to-lita MLB experience, with Miller's style and humorous anecdotes that have made him the voice of baseball over the last 20 years.

Formats: PlayStation, Sega Saturn **Players:** 1-2 **Available:** April 15, 1997



VR Baseball looks to have all the makings of a great baseball game. I mean, you read about all of the exciting features that are offered, like updated 1997 rosters with 1996 statistics, a real time scoreboard that keeps track of scores around the league as well as current statistics, real 3D stadiums with all 28 Major League Stadiums, and more. But the preview version that I played, although very early, has a long way to go.

You will swear by the sounds that you are actually in the ballpark, intermittent screams from the crowd, a faint murmur surrounding the yard, the announcer's voice resonating off the walls throughout, and the hollow crack of

GAMEFAN
STORIES



PREVIEW



DEVELOPER - EA SPORTS

PUBLISHER - EA SPORTS

FORMAT - CD

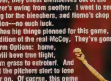
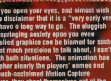
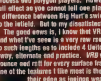
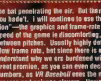
IS IN PLAYING - 1.2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - SPRING '97



JOE KIDD
SURF-WING,
BATTAH...



the bat penetrating the air. But then you open your eyes, and almost wish you hadn't. I will continue to use the disclaimer that it is a "very early version"—the graphics and frame-rate have a long way to go. The sluggish speed of the game is disconcerting, springing anxiety upon you even between pitches. Usually highly detailed graphics can be blamed for such slow frame rate, but since there is not much precision to talk about, I can't understand why we are burdened with both situations. The animation has great promise, as you can even decipher clearly the players' names and numbers, as VR Baseball uses the much-acclaimed Motion Capture process and polygon players. However, they cheat themselves out of the full effect as you cannot tell one player's swing from another. I went to see a difference between Big Hurt's swing for the bleachers, and Home's chop to the infield. But to my dissatisfaction—no such luck.

The good news is, I know that VR has big things planned for this game, and what I've seen is a very raw rendition of the real McCoy. They've gone to such lengths as to include 4 Uniform Options: home, away, alternate and practice. VRU will have true light, bounce and roll for every surface from grass to AstroTurf. And one of the features I like most is that the pitchers start to lose their edge as innings wear on. Of course, this game would not be complete without VR's signature 300-degree camera rotation, which is the most dramatic effect that astonishes everyone. JJK

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GRAND PRIX



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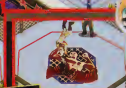
ESRB rating: K-A (Kids to Adults)

Must be 18 years of age for full product possession. Retailer store display required.



Fire Pro Wrestling

SIX MEN SCRAMBLE



UFC STYLE

R REVIEW



DEVELOPER: ROMAN

PUBLISHER: ROMAN

TURNOUT: C+

OF PLAYERS: 1-6

DIFFICULTY: ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE: NOW JAPAN

Strap's one happy punk. They keep throwing these wrestling games my way and I keep taking them! This month's wrestling review spotlights Roman's *Fire Pro Wrestling: Six Men Scramble*. I've been awestruck by beautiful polygonal beauty for the last few months, so playing *Six Men Scramble* is all of hand drawn, 2D joy in a breath of fresh air.



STEEL CAGE MODE

Let's clear something up, straight off: *Six Men Scramble* is pure arcade action. It's not a simulation, and you won't need a strategy guide to play. Nothing but a ton of cool moves, easy controls, and constant mayhem. The wrestlers are taken, but I found exact duplicates of practically every big name: Macho Men, Vader, The Giant, The Road Warriors, Sting, The Steiner Bros., and specialists like Maurice Smith, Peter Dinklage, and a ton of others. You might have noticed those last two aren't wrestlers, and that's exactly what this game offers: Athletes from wrestling, kick boxing,

shoot-fighting, even UFC, and they all use their custom styles and moves against each other. Ever wonder how the polished mat-fighting of *Street Fighter* would hold up against the crashing slams and holds of the dog-fisted grunts? In *Six Men Scramble*, anything goes.

So you're still not interested? Try this one: Multi-tapped, 6 player, simultaneous wrestling. Steel cage, electric fence, octagon, and dome rings. Over 35 fighters, each with 5 different uniforms. Battle Royale, Death Match, Elimination, Tournament, and Wrestler Creation modes. There's even 4 different refs, and you guessed it, some are blind, some are tough.



More? How about silky smooth scaling, to keep track of the action. Or zero slow-down, even when six mad apes are pounding the ropes. Throw in

devastating tag-team moves, power counters, even last-second reversals, and, well, I'm out of breath.

I'm going to cap this one off with an essential point: *Fire Pro Wrestling* is a must-have multi-player game, guaranteed to please. The moves are ultra-basic, there's an insane amount of characters and options, and...and it's 2D, isn't that? JS



JACQUES TRAP
Mindless multi-player 2D wrestling extravaganzas

BATTLE ROYALE!





SHOOT OUT '97

Sony's *NBA Shoot Out '97* has me intrigued. When all the while I thought the Zone 2 had great graphics and gameplay but not enough realism, I conversely felt that *NBA Live '97* was extremely realistic, but gameplay was a little too slow. *Shoot Out*, on the other hand, seems to have a combination of realism as well as tempo, and smooth gameplay that makes this hope unique and appealing. I do, however, consider this game to be more Zone-ish than *Live*-ish. Simulations are still very easy to get like Zone, but *Shoot Out* offers more in the way of one-on-one play, better timed rebounds, and the ability to take a charge.

The court graphics are great, but I would prefer more detail applied to the individual players. It's difficult to distinguish specific players, other than their skin tone and their speed... I mean, you can't accurately say, "Now that's Scottie Pippen." The only other hang-up I had, was that you cannot shoot a shot from the baseline, without the ball hitting the back end of the backboard, even though you are clearly in baselines... However, the fancy dribbling is the best I've seen—behind the backs, crossovers, and between the legs. I would, however, like to see the moves have more of an impact in terms of taking off the opponent. I found it difficult, but possible, to shake defenders one on one, and the interior game is especially difficult, as computer defenders do not go for the pump fake and they block shots with the greatest of ease—no easy layups here! It is really refreshing to see guys taking charges and being sent sprawling on their backs, or big men in the paint being stripped as they bring the ball down—these are frequent occurrences in the actual game of basketball that are seldom or never seen in any of the other basketball sims.

You do have Create Player Mode which is always fun, and in *Shoot Out*'s version, they have allotted only a specific amount of skills to be distributed where you desire. One of the more attractive features are the statistics that are shown by the players' head shots as they apply, like Jason Kidd with 25 assists. There are 6 different camera angles in the camera menu, which comes complete with a preview window. For all you rookie hoards, *Shoot Out '97* has the complete class of this year's talented rookies; high-school phenoms and senior standouts. You can play exhibition, a one-on-one w/ stat-tracking, or else shoot straight to the playoffs. This game does some real nice things, and is worth the investment. JK



DEVELOPER - SONY	# OF PLAYERS - 1-8
PUBLISHER - SONY	DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
FORMAT - CD	AVAILABLE - NOW



FIFA 97

GAMEFAN
SPORTS



PREVIEW



SEGA SATURN

REPLAYS - 15

ANALOG - 16

CONTROL - 16

AI - 15

REPLAYS - 15

ANALOG - 16



JACQUES STRAP
This one needs
help, serious
help!



The Saturn FIFA '97 was previewed last issue, if you remember, based on an early beta version. Our latest rev has reached its final beta slopes, so this might be your last chance to check it out before it joins the PS version on the shelves.

The FIFA series has always benefited from the license. To most of us, this is cool (world teams, many leagues, etc.), but it's not going to determine if it's worth buying. We're just looking for the best playing/best looking soccer game, something like Sega's WWS '97 or Konami's Perfect Striker. Anybody can see the power in these titles. FIFA's been the best for years, but ever since it hit the PS and Saturn it's been filled with problems.

For starters, the Saturn version has a horrible frame rate. 20 fps, tops, and it shows. The indoor and outdoor stadiums are well-designed, I'll give them that, but the poor frame rate screws up everything. I guess the polygonal players really tax the Saturn hardware—so, well! VR Soccer did it, WWS '97 did it, and the frame rate was excellent in both games. No excuses; FIFA '97 looks bad...

Why does it have to play as bad as it looks?! Really, it seems as though every movement you attempt to execute is accompanied by a severe lag time. You'll be chugging up the field, counting the frames per second on both hands, and the game just refuses to respond on time! Frustration, yee! It's like the whole game, and I mean everything, from bad control to chunky graphics, isn't moving as fast as it should (or could) be. It means anything, the heel tricks and lobbs offer delicious set up opportunities, just give yourself LOTS of time to pull one off.

J.S.'s personal note: Hey, I wasn't looking to hag on FIFA '97—it's just not too good. The final breaks include new city backgrounds, menu screen changes, little stuff like that. If the frame rate goes through any improvements, I'll gladly eat my words, but the graphics are apparently done. Hopefully I'll be back with good news—it not, stay away from the Saturn version of FIFA '97. JS



BIG BASS WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Forget about *FFVII*, PlayStation fishing is finally here! Oh please, people are too hard on fishing games. These games can only ever do one thing well: offer a realistic fishing experience. If that's missing, it's over. With *Big Bass World Championship*, Hot-B once again proves where their experience lies. This game will leave a bad taste in your mouth the first time you see it in motion, but give it a try, like I did, and you'll be pleasantly surprised by the solid gameplay.

The first time I played *BBWC*, I thought to myself, "There's no way this is going to make it." The 3D engine is on par, or sub-par, with first generation PS 3D standards: clipping problems, polygonal break-up, and a poor frame rate. The fishermen are rendered, but for some strange reason there's glitchy spots floating all around them (I keep telling people it's them darn mosquitoes!). Even the CG, in the intro and intermissions, is basic, boring stuff. There you have it, the graphics aren't even a factor.

But I looked beyond all that, entered a tournament, and started fishing. I liked the control on the boat, and the casting system is accurate and well-implemented (as in: it takes skills). Reeling in fish is a special treat: For every pull on the line, you must counter in that same direction with a tug of your own. All of this goes down FAST, and you've got to keep an eye on the power meter of the fish in order to judge the reel-in (certain counter-tugs take off more energy). Very cool. You can also swap between over and underwater views, just in case you're using bobbing lures to entice the fishes.

Big Bass is very relaxing: ambient sound effects, rain, thunder, the works. There's plenty of tournaments, a free practice lake, and a perfect menu system (marred only by excessive loading). I'm glad I played this one enough to filter through the bad, and enjoy the good. You might do the same. **JS**

CONGRATULATIONS!

You are placed

1st

SAVED 100% (100% BONUS 1.0)

(Achieved 100% BONUS 1.0)

R
REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - HOT-B

PUBLISHED - HOT-B

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOW



JACQUES STRAP
FFVII WHO CARES?
I'M GOIN' FISHIN'!



CHOOSE FROM EIGHT
WORLD-CLASS FIGHTERS!!!



THE ARENA FIGHTERS

vast majority of this century, evolving into a highly ritualized and undeniably athletic combination of stunts and soap opera.

The martial arts or street fighting contests rarely even attempt to imitate reality. In most cases, the *karate* and *kung fu* seen in video games are once-removed replications of the klor of *mano a mano* (i.e., hand-to-hand) combat seen in chop-socky films. The punches are accompanied by cannon-like explosions, while the fighters can leap vast heights and distances and even hurl bolts of fire or other forces through the psychokinetic evocation of chi, energy which is said to be generated within the human body.

All of which is a pretty good distance from a sumo match or a *keiko* competition.

K-1: The Arena Fighters, on the other hand, is dripping with realism. Based on a first-rate Japanese game which was sold under the title *Fighting Illusion*, T+HQ picked up the license, then signed a deal with the prestigious K-1 kickboxing organization to use the K-1 tournament name and format. Then the publisher actually signed eight K-1 competitors, allowing gamers to use simulacra possessing the skill, style, strength and stamina of legit kickboxing stars Andy Hug, Ernesto Hoost, Mike Bernardo, Sam Greco, Musashi, Jerome Le Banner, Peter Aerts and Changjuick Kiatwongit.

You want realism? Each of the fighters is outfitted with an on-screen fact sheet as well as a rotating, ray-traced three-dimensional body model and supplementary facial portrait. It can be played in one-player, two-player or tournament mode (with tournaments permitting human players to control up to all eight fighters). Other neat features include an auto-cam point of view which automatically adjusts to provide the optimal visual display; power meters which indicate the flow of momentum and the combatants' stamina; and a digital clock to track the three-minute rounds.

The play action is pretty smooth, though fighters tend to slide around the ring more than step and the graphics, while not loaded up with spectacular eye candy, are absolute meat-and-potatoes stuff. And don't try to turn this into a boxing match, at least not against a computer-controlled foe: punchers who can't do damage with their feet rarely make it past the first round (remember, in actual tournaments there is a mandatory minimum number of kicks which must be thrown in every round or the fighter forfeits points).

Are you re-a-r-ready to rumble? If so, *K-1: The Arena Fighters* will give you all you can handle. **BA**



DEVELOPER - KING

PUBLISHER - T+HQ

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOW



BILLY BLANKS
K-1 is dripping with realism!



Virtual Fighting Coming to the PlayStation 2

In a startling turn of events, the current president of Bandai (and soon-to-be president of Sega-Bandai) commented in the February 6 issue of the *Munichi Shimbun*, a well-respected Japanese newspaper, that Sega had obtained a license to develop a Virtua Fighter game for the PlayStation. "The new company's [Sega-Bandai's] policies," listed the president, "will completely change. For example, we have obtained a license to produce a Virtua Fighter on SCE's PlayStation. If Nintendo gives the OK, we'll produce one on the Nintendo 64 as well."

This is huge news if it proves true. Unfortunately, when Sega and Bandai were contacted directly about this matter, they staunchly denied it. They did, however, hint at the possibility of Sega making other PlayStation games: "Bandai is not going to release software exclusively for the Saturn. It's possible that Sega's titles may appear on PlayStation [from Bandai] and Bandai's PlayStation games may appear on Saturn."

Only time will tell. The Sega/Bandai merger is due for October, so don't expect any official announcements until then.

Capcom's Zapping Game Is On Its Way to the CD

In a surprise announcement, Capcom of Japan has revealed that BioHazard 2 is currently facing an almost total re-design, and will now arrive in late 1997 on 2 CDs! Why the changes? Apparently Capcom felt BioHazard 2 was too similar to the original, and wanted to give players a more unique experience. They also mentioned a new aspect of the game called "Zapping," rumored to utilize the memory cards in some fashion.

Real Fantasy VII Arrives on Super Nintendo

Square's *Final Fantasy VII* sold through almost 2.4 million units in its first weekend on sale, effectively making it the fastest-selling game of all time. The vast majority of these sales were not through game shops, but rather convenience stores equipped with Square/Digicube's kiosks. This will come as quite a surprise to naysayers who claimed the convenience store plan just wouldn't work.

Japanese Release Expected Spring Edition

Capcom of Japan is preparing a ¥7,800 special edition CyberBots package for Japanese release, of which there will be only 55,555 copies ever made. The special edition comes with the *CyberBots Secret File DX*, a 50-page hardcover art, CG, and comic book based on Capcom's popular freebie "Secret Files," the *Cyberbots Panorama Illustration*, a folding pop-up-book, and a specially-packaged game case, CD and manual. The home version of *CyberBots* (as well as allowing you to use the arcade version's boss robots and characters) features an all-new, CG rendered character... Zero Gouki. Zero Gouki is, obviously, a giant robot version of everyone's favorite Shotohan master. ZG comes with all his human counterpart's moves, including the Go Hadoken, Go Shoryuken, and Tatsumaki Zanikukyaku.

CyberBots is compatible with SNK's 8-Meg RAM cartridge (although not necessary to play the game, it adds more frames of animation) and will be released in Japan in March.

Ys III-IV

Yes, it's true: Falcom has announced a new game in its critically acclaimed *Ys* series, *Ys Eternal*. There's just one catch: Falcom is going back to its roots, and *Eternal* will only be available for Japanese NEC PC-98X1 personal computers. *Ys Eternal* has no release date as of yet, and we can only hope and dream that Falcom announces it for a home console.

Real Action Goes to Japan

Nintendo of Japan reported that their Nintendo 64 system will receive a price drop of 33% on March 14, lowering the machine's cost from ¥25,000 to ¥16,800 (approximately \$204 to \$137). Why the sudden reduction in price? According to Nintendo, high manufacturing volumes have resulted in a new lower price for semiconductor, but experts tell a very different story. Apparently Nintendo, with their lack of new games, is feeling the heat from Sega and Sony. N64's software sales currently comprise only 1-3% of the game weekly sales totals in Japan (with PlayStation game sales hovering around 45-60%), and the hardware's not doing much better. And while this new lower price might temporarily alleviate the slow system sales, it's safe to say that nothing will permanently change until more games are released.

Going to Greater Live Action Film

While news of Namco working on CG films is nothing new, their latest movie project is something of a surprise. Simply labeled "Ai Sunu" (To Love), Namco's new film announcement is not only based on a famous Japanese love story, it features live actors! That's right, Namco's making live action movies! Strange but true... More information as we get it!

Recently Released Study-Purpose Gamecase Arrives

Bandai's new portable game is selling like hotcakes among female consumers. The game is called Tamagotch, and its name comes from "tamago" (which means "egg") and "watch." The interesting point of this game is that it is a portable simulation game for raising a chick-like creature. The manufacturer claims that it is a digital pet that came from outer space, and is not a chick. The little screen shows the process of its growth—an egg hatches, a chick comes out, grows, and lays eggs. The funny thing is that you have to take care of the chicks as if you were actually raising them. Otherwise, they die! The game is egg shaped and is about 4 cm x 3 cm; you can easily hold it in your hand. It sells for about 18 dollars in Japan.



Restart back, Review Quality, and New Moves

Console game machines appear to be becoming the stage for singers. Digital Dance Mix Vol. 1, from Sega Enterprises, is a CD-ROM that features Namie Amuro's dancing and singing. Namie is currently one of the most popular female singers who can dance well while singing. You're probably picturing something like MTV-style video footage on CD-ROM, but your expectations are wrong: This CD-ROM contains 3-D graphics of her—a virtual Namie Amuro. You'll soon forget that this is a virtual idol once you take a look at it, since her movement is so realistic. The reason Namie's moves were motion-captured and processed by Sega's AM2. Now, if you just wanted to watch Namie's dancing, you could just buy a video tape, but there is a function that you can never use on a VCR or LD player: You have 360° camera control, zoom-in and out, and bottom-up angles. The CD-ROM is distributed only in convenience stores, is priced at ¥2,800 and contains two songs plus four different mini-games.

On the contrary, a digital idol has found her way into reality. Shiori Fujisaki, who is a character in the Konami game called *Tokimeki Memorial*, recently released her debut album, *My Sweet Valentine*. "When the person in charge of production asked me to compose songs for an idol, Shiori Fujisaki, I didn't know either Shiori or *Tokimeki Memorial*. When I found out that Shiori is not human but a virtual idol, I was surprised," says well-known song writer Kazuo Saito.

is FINAL FANTASY VII THE MOST INCREDIBLE EXPERIENCE THE WORLD OF VIDEO GAMES HAS EVER OFFERED?



own long lines at convenience stores on a weekend. No, none of these items came close to equaling the success of *Final Fantasy VII*, a game that just happens to be the best-selling item in history. Okay, sure, I just made that up, but the one thing is that it might actually be true. Can you think of any consumer product that's sold that well in a weekend?



Now, I'm not saying that the release of *Final Fantasy VII* is the most important event in human history. There are some very nice things about penicillin, for example. I just want you to know what we're dealing with here. This review isn't a starter of "should you buy *Final Fantasy*," because you should (and you will). And if this review dwells a bit much on the game's negatives, you mustn't think that these problems, although major, can come anywhere close to overbalancing the game's stunning positives—*FFVII* is quite possibly the finest video game ever made. So the topic of this review, in light of the year of anticipation, the broken sales records, and all the media hype, is "Is any game worth all of that?" And that's a trickier question to answer.

One simply can't exaggerate when discussing the scope of *Final Fantasy VII*. You don't have to see the list of 500+ names in the credits to realize that the budget of this game probably exceeds the budget of the 2nd most expensive game ever by a factor of ten. Outside of the battles, overhead map and mini games, every screen of the game was pre-rendered to a degree of visual quality that's never come close to



being achieved before in the video game industry. And believe it or not, there's nearly fifty hours of this beauty, with no two locations looking even similar, and few occasions in which you have to backtrack. When you team in the real-time battles with their stunning backdrops, dazzling spell effects, ultra-realistic character motion, and unprecedented enemy variety and design, there's no denying that this is the most beautiful game ever made. By far.

Of course, it's the storyline that makes an RPG (or so conventional wisdom goes), and *FFVII*'s plot is almost as revolutionary as its graphics.

...stunning backdrops, dazzling spell effects, ultra-realistic character motion, and unprecedented enemy variety and design.

Cloud Strife

FINAL FANTASY VII





No one loves *FF I-6* more than I, but it's no secret that their storylines were written with the pre-teen audience in mind. The influence of Director Yoshinori Kitase made *FFVII*'s storyline far more memorable than previous games, but it has nothing on *FFVII*... Square has clearly turned their sights towards older gamers, and the result is a storyline so complex, powerful, and unexpected that even the briefest of plot summaries would ruin dozens of stunning plot

twists. It's true that the writers completely drop the ball near the end of the game, but even at its worst, *FFVII*'s story is a world apart from the clichéd drivel we've come to expect from video game storylines.

The beautiful graphics and brilliant storyline come together in a way you have no experience to understand... Remember the Opera House from *FFVE*? Of course you do! Now imagine a game in which every single scene is the Opera House. And that right there is reason enough to make *FFVII* the crowning exhibit in the video game hall of fame (viewable in my home by appointment only, \$6.00 for adults, half price for seniors and children under 12). Everything else—the cool battles, the amazing FMV, the dozens of cool mini games, the hours of optional quests, Nobuo Uematsu's characteristically excellent soundtrack—that's all just a nice bonus.

Continued on the next page



FANTASY FACTS: THE FINAL FANTASY VII

As intrepid *FF*ers know, every *Final Fantasy* has a new "system" in the battles. IV saw the birth of the "Active Time Battles," V had the brilliant "Job System," VI had the ho-hum "Accessory System," and VII has... (dramatic pause) the "Materia System."

Barret Wallace



The unique weapon abilities, not to mention special abilities are all coded up in little Makoto-produced crystals called "Materia."

For the first time in an *FF* game, up characters have any special abilities or magic, except for their own limit breaks. Instead, the magic, abilities, call spells and special attributes are all coded inside little Makoto-produced crystals called "Materia." These fit into slots on your weapons, and give you all sorts of things... a call spell, the ability to steal, an entire family of magical spells (like all three thunder spells, or cure spells, or whatever), the ability to learn spells from enemies, HP bonuses, increased luck, all sorts of things. Other Materia, when placed in adjoining slots with certain other materia, change that materia's attributes. For example, a spell that once targeted only one ally or enemy can be made to target all your enemies.

The Materia go up levels as you gain Ability Points, which come along with XP at the end of battles. Certain armor and weapons double, or even triple the rate at which your Materia grow, and some weapons and armor don't let them grow at all. Which is a shame, because if you use that equipment, you'll never get to "Master" your materia, which causes the little guys to reproduce themselves in a sudden fit of sexual passion.





Unfortunately, *Final Fantasy VII* is not without its flaws. There are a few small ones: The way your character gets lost in the sometimes confusing backdrops, and the way you have to be constantly re-equipping your Materia when you change characters, for example. And there are a few big ones.

The first big one is the difficulty. In their quest to reach out for a new, older fan base, Square abandoned the challenging nature of previous *Final Fantasy* titles, creating the first *FF* that could conceivably be beaten without ever dying. I never once paused to slaughter for experience, and after dying only once (in a completely optional subquest), got



through the entire rest of the game with little difficulty. The many optional subquests that I didn't even take the first time through could only have made me stronger, and anyone who completes all of them would have the resources necessary (in the form of a very tasty call spell) to kill the last boss in a single shot. In

a *Final Fantasy* game, this is nearly inaccessible. I sincerely hope the difficulty will be raised in the American version (Then they even could sell that version in Japan as *Final Fantasy VII - Hard Type!*)

The other problem is that even with the game's two month delay, the last five-to-ten hours seem horribly rushed. The storyline



Aerith Gainsborough

Stunning battle sequences feature a whole array of superbly-designed and expertly animated creatures. Prepare for a visual masterpiece!





falls apart near the end, the last dungeon completely sucks, and the game's many subplots and supporting characters have either disappointing resolutions or no resolutions at all. While the last bosses, last boss music and ending are all very impressive, the last five or ten hours can't come close to capturing the genius of the first forty. It makes you wonder if there were some really cool parts that were cut from the original plans when Square ran out of time. Square's obvious haste in completing the game could also have been one of the reasons for its unfortunate lack of difficulty.

Although flawed, the one thing I can say about *Final Fantasy VII* is that it's a twenty out of ten that could have been a thirty out of ten. This is still the most incredible experience the world of video gaming has to offer. So in the final analysis, yeah, it is worth all of that. *Tabaki*



CALL SPELLS

Without a doubt, the greatest graphical extravagance to behold are the Call Spells. Square's imagination and research into mythology have combined to produce some of the most spectacular incantations ever seen! Amazing PlayStation visuals are called forth!

Call Spells are now only available through Materia, and each of the Call Spell Materia that you equip take away a hefty chunk of your HP! Still worth it? You better believe it, honey! The call spells are more powerful than ever before, and more importantly, they're possibly the most beautiful things in the game. Anyone who was blown away by the Laviathan call spell in the *Tabak* No. 1 demo



has a little surprise coming, as that was one of the worst of the lot. You just have to see these things to believe 'em.

The 20 call spells in *FFVII* bring back a lot of old *Final Fantasy* favorites (including three different Bahamuts), but also introduce a lot of new stand-to-be-legendary monsters to the series, including Kujata, Knights of the Round, and Hades.

Summon the might of legend's deific creation to smite your foes before you! Bahamut, Etern, Titan, Leviathan, Rajah, Hades, Phoenix, Odin and others await your call!



Tifa Lockhart



MORE GREAT SCENES FROM FINAL FANTASY VII...



Mind-blowing cut scenes highlight your adventure! The story unfolds through awesome CG movies that will blow you away!



FINAL FANTASY VII: THE COMPLETE GUIDE

You won't just be tramping over tundra on foot. Oh no. As you'd probably guess by now, the designers at Square have invented some truly spectacular (and wacky) new forms of transport to traverse the map sections of the game. Newer vehicles can even reach otherwise unobtainable areas...

In addition to the usual assortment of chocobos, submarines, and airships, FFVII has a couple of cool new vehicles, including a shut-down airplane that can do little more than skim around on shallow water, an all-terrain buggy which is able to traverse deserts and rivers to reach new islands, and crazy chocobos that can run straight up cliffs, walk on water, and turn into lava! He he! I'm kidding about that last one of course. You see, I said that because they can walk on water. Get it?

Um, anyway, you can also drive motorcycles, snowboards, and chocobos in the various mini-games. Displayed in 3D, these 'new' sequences make a nice break from the tedium of the storyline, and are very, very cool.

Vincent Valentine





FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE SPECIAL PREVIEW

Final Fantasy VII also utilizes the new Limit Break system. These are basically a set of awesome special attacks which are unique to a particular character. Not even the mighty incantations of the Call Spells can match a fully powered Limit Break attack!

About every character in Final Fantasy VII has four levels of Limit Break, built up throughout the game. When you first start your epic quest, your characters only have a single level one "break," and each subsequent level of Limit Break offers two more attacks. When engaged in combat, you can only release your Limit Break when your gauge reaches full power, and this gauge is built up after every hit you take (think of like a "fury-meter"). Select your type of Limit Break wisely however; you cannot change it mid-battle.

Cid Highwind



Take too many hits and your party will reach their Limit Break attack!
Special powers that can destroy your enemies or heal your party!



Our epic quest has ended. But yours shall begin shortly. In September to be exact, when the official version of the game is released. GameBan would advise waiting for the official version; not least because everything will be in English and therefore a lot more enjoyable! Return to us then, and read the definitive review, gape at the even greater selection of amazing screenshots, and gawk as we reveal even more!



PLAY FANTASY VII REMAKE
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HIGH INTENSITY SHOOTING FOR YOUR PLAYSTATION STRAIGHT FROM THE ARCADE! TAITO'S RAYSTORM IS AMAZING!

R REVIEW



PlayStation

DEVELOPER - TAITO

PUBLISHER - TAITO

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

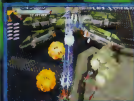
AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



E. STORM

HIGH POWERED
SHOOTING RETURNS!

RAYSTORM



were duking it out simultaneously. They did over-do it on the shooters, though. But did they to the point where most opers have become so wary of them that they may become an endangered species here in the US?

Accleim has shown they've got the mettle to bring over the very best and so I wonder, could RayStorm be on their '97 ticket? If it is, watch out, because this is the shooter from which all 32-bit shooters will be measured in the future. (cont'd. p. 96)

Once upon a time there were so many shooters that one could find cartridges wedged under doors or balancing out wobbly home furnishings.

Whip Rush, ThunderForce 2.3&4, Wings of War, Truxton, Forgotten Worlds, Musha, Gaires, Curse, Darius, Phelios, Reiden, Steel Empire, Vapor Trail, Galaxy Force 2, Bio

Hazard, SubTerrorie, Insector X, Hellfire, Super Fantasy Zone, Grenade, Atomic Robo Kid, Penoremo Cotton, Silpheed, SolFasee, VeryTex, Gray Lancer, Arrow Flesh, Heavy Unit, Thunderblade, Space Harrier, After Burner, Zero Wing, Space Mega Force, Axeley, StarFox, Super EDF, Phelax, Aero Blaster, UN Strike, Gradius, Getse of Thunder, Dead Moon, Download, Soldier Blade,

Smirgigan, and Air Zonk come immediately to mind when I think back to those glorious times when the SNES, Genesis, and TurboGrafx (god I miss NEC)



ARCADE
MODE
VS.
PS
MODE





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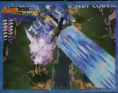


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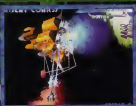
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RayStorm did well in Japanese arcades and then appeared here in selected high dollar locales as a 50-cents-per-play piece. Somehow, Taika has not only duplicated the original perfectly, but managed to squeeze in a PlayStation special version as well.

The best way to describe RayStorm in terms of appearance is Axel meets Splatoon. Except RayStorm, unlike Splatoon (which I loved), is a real time polygonal game, where Splatoon's arts were stored as FMV. The graphics are absolutely gorgeous and the frame rate is stunning, ranging between 30 & 60 fps with hordes of enemies.

IF YOU
BUY ONE
SHOOTER
THIS
YEAR...



A-GARY 1





...MAKE
IT
RAY
STORM!

and effects on screens. You're hard pressed to find a single moment when some blazing effect isn't on screen and the camera work is second to none. The bosses are huge, moose, and highly detailed beasts with a pulse with life and dish out explosive attacks. Each is an inspired work. As for the music, well, ZTT (Zyntrix) has outdone themselves. Use the soundtrack if you listen to game music CDs.

And finally RayStorm supports 2-player gameplay, should you choose to recruit a friend. Simply put, it doesn't get much better for shooter fans. We'll keep an eye out for a US version. In the meantime, the import's out there now. Personally, I wouldn't wait on this one. **E.S.**

A-GARY 2



**TIME ATTACK!
CHOOSE YOUR RIVAL AND HIT THE ROAD!
DON'T YOU HAVE SOMEONE TO KILL?**

CIRCUIT • FREEWAY • MOUNTAIN • KAISER'S ROAD

Chase... BQ! There, I said it. Now for the good news. While Ray Tracers is a sequel of sorts to that long lost stick-erams it has gone through a complete metamorphosis. Cheeky sprites have become smooth, texture-mapped polygons, rancid tunes have become luscious melodies from ZTT (Zestets), and boring and hoarse have gone from core just like yours to huge meek-style howlers that fire smoking projectiles and animate with

I'm going to say something

that may make more than a few of you cringe as you harken back to that matinee of bad game theatre...

RAY TRACERS

Besides those 8 levels of high speed herding carnage, RT features a Time Trial Mode where you can either choose a rival or simply go for the record. I think it's safe to say that Chase BQ is dead, while the concept lives on in pure PlayStation splendor. Now let's see, I've got a heech mere space to fill and I've pretty much said what needs to be said. Hmm... let me see... Oh yeah, here's something cool. The courses are no longer simply long stretches of boring highway, or sir. Now, in many instances you'll break through barriers or wear off into greasy canyons, sewers, sodergrooved funnels, and other such diverse terrain. As you speed towards the climactic and bottle, enemy vehicles enrage you at every turn. You can either pace them, (attempt to at least), or, by ramming into them, cause them to explode which results in impressive pyrotechnics. Depending how fast you complete each course, your time is allotted to destroy the boss. Save your furies—in Ray Tracers, the enemy is quite intelligent. The

R
REVIEW

PlayStation

DEVELOPER - TAITO

PUBLISHER - TAITO

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



E. STORM
THE CLASSIC HQ
HENCHAMATE
MAKES THE OLD
ONE LOOK
ANCIENT!



**Huge fees await! Ramming
Speed! Go baby go! Yudaman!**

gama moves along at a blistering frame rate, by the way; in fact, it may be the fastest in its class, and a large class that is. So if you're looking for a little import flavor in your PS arena at all, manna, have a look at Tale's latest. They are quickly emerging as a top PS developer. Wait 'til you see Ray Storm (pg. 87). Oh my. I can't wait to see what they came up with next! **ES**

JAPAN NOW

Mountain Peak Fastest Drift Master (a rough translation of the title) is coming to the US under the moniker of Peak Performance featuring Pilote Peak hillclimb for PlayStation. If you've always wanted to power slide your way around twisting mountain roads, Atlus has got a game for you.

For starters, you have a wonderful assortment of cars to choose from—over 20 in all. And aside from a few highly specialized vehicles like a stadium truck and a racing spec Viper, high performance Japanese cars flesh out the remaining selections. Now

you can finally blast through winding mountain roads in the massive Japanese market-specific Nissan Skyline or Euroa Roadster. All of the cars are wonderfully modeled and shaded and truly resemble their real life counterparts. Most astounding however, is the amount of detail in each car's interior. You can actually see your little guy inside shifting. Cut the car sideways enough and you'll even see him flinging the wheel around like a madman. I was impressed when



I knew saw these little diamond-headed guys inside the car in Sega Rally for Saturn, but this takes it to a whole new level.

Outside the car, things remain fairly impressive. Trackside detail is solid, the 3D engine is fast and smooth and there's only the slightest pop-up. And, as the name implies, you'll be driving on some fantastic courses that undulate and twist their way around mountains. On top of that, the courses themselves are extremely long.

As for the play mechanics, the title says it all: prepare to drift. And why not? It's a total blast and executed very well in this game. Bank the hand brake and watch as the tail and of your car breaks loose and you fly around a corner. Good fun, indeed. The computer is obviously easy to beat, but it is the plethora of options that gives that performance its longevity. There are five courses to choose from,

each with the option to race them forward, backward, at night, in the afternoon, or at sunset. In two player mode, you can race with a horizontal or vertical split screen, both with very good frame rates. There is a time trial mode and even a gymkhana course where you can set up your own cones and wares between them. Finally, there is the amusing story mode, (which will be excised from the US version) wherein you go one on one against a trash talking, cigarette-smoking rival.

Add the wealth of options to the nicely done visuals and you have a fine racing title. The domestic version should be out as you read this, so if you like your racing heavy on the drifting, you'll totally dig this. **DD**



PILOTE PEAK

FASTEST DRIFT MASTER



天外魔境 第四の黙示録

The Apocalypse IV

Red

Hudson

01 14 97



The Tenjir Makyo series has the distinct honor of being the only major Japanese RPG series that has never been translated into English. As excellent as this series is, we rarely cover it for just that reason. But this time, I just couldn't resist, as the setting for this installment (full title: Tenjir Makyo: The Fourth Revelation: The Apocalypse IV) is none other than the history of this great land we call (sniff!)... America! Sort of.

Past Tenjir Makyo games were based on the writings of an apparently fictional Westerner and his unlearned impressions of late 19th century Japan. This time, the roles are reversed, and the developers made TM:TPR:IA4 based on their own cloaked ideas of American history and geography.

And so what if all the dates are completely wrong, and both Seattle and Portland are neighboring cities in that most Northwestern of states, Montana? That's half the charm. TM:TPR:IA4 has a very cool storyline, with an interesting mix of hilarious hijinks and occasionally serious plot points based on the Bible's Book of Revelations.

As a game, Tenjir Makyo's strongest point is its video quality. The animation in this game is all full screen, 280ps, and with none of that chunky Cinespak screen garbage (although miraculously, it *is* Cinespak). This video is, astonishingly, better than the PlayStation's best, even though in every single previous game, the Saturn has lagged far behind in video quality.

The battles are impressive, with full screen enemies that look great, but could stand a few more frames of animation. Unfortunately, the overheads are disappointing, with simplistic visuals and bland colors reminiscent of PC entertainment titles. While it's cool to be visiting such actual locations as New Orleans, Phoenix, New York and Hollywood, the game would be much more enjoyable if they didn't look so bland.

The mixture of stereotypical American history and biblical imagery is a guarantee that TM:TPR:etc., etc. will never make its way to the states. But import buyers might enjoy this one as both a pretty good RPG and a fascinating cultural curiosity.

T

Fun
screen battles,
with Hudson's astounding
"High-Bird™" animation!

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES... A POWERFUL ORGANIZATION CHALLENGES THE GREATEST WARRIORS IN THE WORLD TO DETERMINE JUST WHO IS...

THE KING OF Fighters '96



TEAM EDIT ALLOWS FOR HUNDREDS OF FIGHTER COMBINATIONS!
CHOOSE FROM SNK'S BIGGEST STARS AND CREATE THE ULTIMATE TEAM!



With Rugal defeated in the previous year's tournament, it seems the way of Fighters competition may no longer go on. A young woman named Kagura Chizuru, however, steps up and announces that she will lead it herself. Kagura guards an ancient evil power known as 'Orochi,' and she is on a quest to find the strongest warriors in the world to help her protect it from Goenitz. Goenitz is one of four Orochi 'Elementalists,' and wishes to release the mystical energy so that he can use it to conquer the world.

Thus opens SNK's latest fighting game, King of Fighters '96. I awaited this one with excitement, not only because I'm a huge SNK fan, but because KOF '95 is still one of my favorite 2D fighting games. Yet, I did have one reservation: In all of SNK's fighting game series, the third title has always been a very poor game. This being the third KOF, I was a bit worried.



SHIDOSHI
COME BACK WHEN
YOU CAN UP!





Thankfully, my fear was for no reason. KOF '96 is an exceptional game, and a solid progression of the series. Play control is very close to '95, yet with little modifications to balance out gameplay. Changes range from giving short attacks more of a delay, to replacing the "background dodge" ability with a somewhat less cheesy roll. Some existing characters get new moves, or tweaks of their old ones, and as always, a new bunch of participants show up for this year's competition. Making an appearance are Kasumi and Mr. Big from Art of Fighting, Geese Howard and Wolfgang Krause from Fatal Fury, and original characters Matsuri, Vice, and Leona, among others. Most of the new characters are great additions (except for Kasumi), yet I'm a bit upset at some of the decisions concerning who was taken out to make room (they should've kept Billy!).

Graphic quality and detail is at its usual high level, and many returning characters were given new standing poses and animation (and if you thought Mai couldn't get any, er, "bouncier," just wait until you see her).



Backgrounds range from the simply okay, to the absolutely amazing: two notable stages are the streets of Osaka with its cars zooming by and huge monitors playing clips of animation, and the stadium with its roaring crowd and onlookers walking around wearing huge heads depicting their favorite fighters.

So how does the Saturn version compare to the original arcade and NeoGeo cart versions? Very well, thanks in part to the RAM cart that SNK has produced. The only real disappointment is the character samples, which are a little muffled and soft. Still, it's a fabulous translation, and excusable when you see all of the animation and background detail. And, remember, KOF '95 had its own specialized RAM cart, and its background music wasn't redbook

audio as it is in '96. On a side note, SNK has started doing with its Saturn games what it does with its NeoGeo games: There is an English option which allows you to play the game fully in English. A wonderful option, especially considering it's rather unlikely we'll see this game in America anytime soon.

Thankfully, while it seems that, day by day, 2D fans like Nick Rox and myself are becoming extinct, companies like SNK still care about us. King of Fighters '96 is a top-quality fighting game, and is not only a must for all SNK fans out there who don't own a NeoGeo or Neo-CD, but for all fighting game fans as well. S

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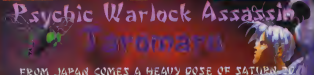
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FROM JAPAN COMES A HEAVY DOSE OF SATURN 3D POWER... BUT WILL THIS MYSTIC DEFENDER EVER SEE THE LIGHT OF DAY IN AMERICA?



If memories of the classic Mystic Defender (an early Genesis masterpiece) came screaming to mind the first time I laid eyes on TWI's Psychic Warlock. It wasn't until playing it however, that I realized this could easily be considered that game's sequel, should Sega wrap it up for a domestic release. Don't hold your breath though, I doubt SOA knows it exists. The game was produced by the unlikelyst of companies, Time Warner Interactive... Japan. And even if they did, a game dealing with such dark themes would likely be turned away. Here it is, though, for your viewing pleasure, a hot 2.5D game for the Saturn, made up primarily of beautifully textured polygons and bursting with inspired special effects. Literally everything you see, except for the distant horizon and the characters, is polygonal. The Saturn's 3D engine is indeed a screamer. 50,000 were produced before TWI Japan ceased operations. A fitting swan song, indeed.



R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER - TIME WARNER

PUBLISHER - TIME WARNER

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN

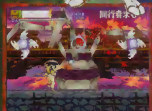


E. STORM
THE SATURN FLEXES
ITS 3D MUSCLE.



The gameplay in PW may be basic, but it's actually quite extraordinary. Rather than merely aiming and shooting enemies, Taromaru or Enka! lock on and fire bursts of energy.

This energy can be accumulated by holding down the attack button and unleashed upon releasing. A full charge sends a furious stream of death through every living soul. You can block enemy attacks





POISONAL STRUCTURES BEING TANKED AT YOU PAGE



by throwing down a protective sphere.

Mastering this technique is key to your survival. Platforming, hiding, dashing, and some amazing boss encounters along with some super cool

level design garnish the feast. It's hardly ever straight walk and shoot, and when it is, it's intense.

All this, combined with the unique attack mechanism and a two player mode makes for a very challenging and entertaining, albeit short (about an hour and change) game. But blissful graphics, fresh gameplay, and a sound-track right out of ancient Japan scream play me again. If you frequent the import market, add this legacy of a dying breed to your quiver of games and dare to walk in the sandals of a warlock.



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OTHER STUFF

SEGA SATURN 2 NEWS AND SPECS

Oh, first things first. Although these specs come from a reliable source (a top Sega developer who recently received a Saturn 2 development station), they may change in the months leading up to Saturn 2's official announcement. Having said that, the specs are current as of this month, and we know you'd want to know them...

The first revelation about the Saturn 2 (the same title again) is that the machine will once again be CD-based. Sega wants a 12x speed "CD-ROM" to minimize loading, along with between 8 to 16 megabytes of RAM (yet to be decided)—an unprecedented amount of memory for a videogame console. The machine will be powered by a Hitachi 64-bit CPU (rumored to run at speeds of 150 MHz) and come complete with a 64-bit graphics chip based on a current PC 3D accelerator card called the Moesler 3D. The sound chip is said to be a Creative Labs AWE 32, a high-end PC sound card that is actually used by musicians to mix music.

The Saturn 2 is currently scheduled for a Sept. 1998 release date in Japan, with a US launch shortly afterwards. The price being quoted at the moment is between \$258 to \$358 (in Japan) though that may change. All internal Sega development teams have taken delivery of their development systems already, and Sega has told them that they must have their launch games ready by no later than August 1998. We have no news yet on what those launch titles might be, but either an enhanced VF3 or possibly even VF4 is likely.

SATURN NEWS

Unfortunately, Sega will NOT be releasing Wey's spectacular FMV adventure, *Enemy Zero* (ED), here in the States due to bad focus testing. It's possible that some other American publisher may pick it up, but don't hold your breath. *Fighters Megamix*, AM2's spectacular 3D fighter, will not be released until June, and there's even a rumor that VF3 may not even make it here due to high costs (the upgrade/necessary cart itself costs about \$600!).

In related news, Team Andromeda is currently working on a sequel to *Phazer Dragon Zwei* for release later this year, and get this—It's going to be a 3D RPG and not a 3D shooter. Yaji Naka is also hard at work on *NIGHTS 2* set to debut in Japan in July, and the USA in September. The game is said to feature the same style of gameplay (2D control in a 3D environment) though this time with a vastly improved graphics engine that displays approximately three times as many polygons as the original.

WILLIAMS PROJECTS FOR '97

During a recent visit, Williams gave us the lowdown on a few of the games they will be showing at E3. For the N64 there will be *Quake* (yeah), *San Francisco Rush*, *RoboTrix*, *War Gods*, *Wayne Gretzky 2*, *Jeet X* and *MX4*. All games are 48-meg carts to be released in the third or fourth quarter. Williams also told us about an all new *Mortal Kombat* RPG that is being produced by John Tobias. *MK Mythologies: Sub-Zero's Adventures* for the PS and N64 will be a 4th-quarter release and will feature characters and locations from the *MK* universe. For the PlayStation Williams is currently developing a follow up to the *Williams Arcade Classics* CD and an all new 3-D version of Atari's legendary *Centipede*.

NINTENDO DROPS THE PRICE OF N64 AND DELAYS MORE GAMES! OOH!

Last week, Nintendo announced that the price of the Nintendo 64 in Japan will drop by a third from 24,800 Yen (\$240 US) to 16,800 Yen (\$135 US). Accordingly, NOA are set to announce a price drop for the American N64 to \$3 to \$149.99. Rumor has it that the 6400 might NOT be at the show, simply because Nintendo wants their N64 as a base to grow before they bring out an add-on. As for *Zelda 64*, NOA recently announced that the game will NOT be 6400, and will instead be released on a 128-meg cart in the 4th quarter. Then, when the 6400 is released next year, Nintendo will release a new disk version of *Zelda* with more levels and features that weren't in the cart version.

In other 6400 news, Goro Takada, the man responsible for the 6400 and the N64 controller, recently told the Japanese press that there were 19 games in development for 6400: *Zelda 64 Plus*, *Slim City*, *Marie Paint*, *Super Mario RPG 2*, *Fire Emblem 64*, *Probot*, *Monsters 64*, *Cabbage* (name will change), *Race Tail No. 1*, *Pin 2* (a fishing game), *Mother 3* and *Super Mario 64 2* (which will now feature different player-controlled characters, SNES style).

Nintendo will ship the 6400 in the 4th quarter of 1997 in Japan, with between 2 to 3 titles available at launch. NOA is aiming for a 1st quarter 1998 release in the States, though that's expected to change.

Finally, Miyamoto has a new RPG in the works (the format is unknown) that is said to be Nintendo's attempt to counter Square's *FFVII* and Enix's *Dragon Quest 7*. Shyeah, right!

SONY NEWS

It's official—Enix has signed a deal with Sony of Japan stating that the highly anticipated

of *Dragon Quest 7* will be a PlayStation exclusive. The game is rumored to be in development for a Summer '98 release date in Japan, with a US version set scheduled with 1st quarter 1999. Also, Sony of America will release the US version under their own label and not Enix's, just like they do with Square.

Sony's latest RPG, *Beyond the Beyond*, has sold over 100,000 copies to date, and Sony is very excited about the success of a relatively low-key RPG. Coupled with the success of *Sakamoto*, this is good news for PS-owning RPG fans.

Nakne 3 will hit the PS later this year with an upgrade pack that enables the PS to perfectly emulate Nemco's system 12 gold-ops. *Wipeout 3* is also in development for later this year, with new tracks and new vehicles.

Finally, we have some preliminary information on PlayStation 2. Set to ship in 1999 in Japan, the rumored specs consist of a 64-bit 256 MHz CPU, a 64-bit graphics chip that can handle 5 to 16 million full-shaded polygons per second, and 32 Mega of RAM. Already word mashes us that *FFVII* is to debut on this new system, though no one is quite sure when.

FINAL ROUND...

Any Channel, the developers of *PQend*, have ceased development of *PQend 2* for the PS because they couldn't find a publisher to sell their game. Instead of making videogames, Any Channel is concentrating on developing a 3D rendering engine for the PC that is said to completely eliminate the need for 3D accelerator cards! Hmmm...

Westwood Studios still hasn't begun development on *Command & Conquer* for the N64, though they admit that technically it is possible. They are currently in the process of converting the C&C pseudo-sequel, *Red Alert*, and *Lords of Lore* to PS for a 4th quarter release.

Street Fighter IV: X-Men on the Saturn will ship with a RAM upgrade cartridge and should be out by July. Capcom has pushed back the release date on *Resident Evil 2* from March to the end of the year in Japan. The US version is expected to hit some 2 to 3 months after that. The game will now come on 2 CDs and will be at least 50% bigger than the first. The Saturn version of *Resident Evil* is also in development. Seibitai *Resident Evil* Disk, the game will be released in Japan this Summer and will include features exclusive to the Saturn. Last but not least, Capcom confirmed that *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike* will be converted to consoles, though no specific platforms were mentioned. Piece your hats now, ladies and gentlemen!

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FROM A CAVE DEEP INSIDE AGOURA...



Dear Frankie,

I can't believe the space they left you in February 1997 issue! You should take in as to the Editor-in-Chief for that one!

I would also like to reply to what Chris Jones said in that same issue. Yes, Chris, I comprehend what you're saying, but it proves you are a complete idiot. The reason you always play the role of a character in RPGs is because THAT'S WHAT MAKES THE FREAKIN' GENRE! You think about that, Chris: Role Playing Game. Geez!

Finally, I'd like to crown Takahi as the king of GameFan. He's always reviewing the hottest RPGs and writes with intelligence.

Takahi rules!

Sincerely,
Adam Lindsey
Tuscola, WA

I received a number of heated letters that took offense to Chris Jones' "I hate RPGs" rant. All I can say is, like I say guys, it's a free(ish) column. Mr. Jones is entitled to his opinion just like everyone else! Even if it is tragically and uselessly misinformed. As for Feb '97, don't remind me. My psyche is scarred forever.

Dear Parveyor of Postscriptage,

I get your mag often (I'm going to get a subscription) and I love the way you've been giving us updates on... FINAL FANTASY VII. Ahem. I own a PlayStation (naturally) and I can't wait III.... FINAL FANTASY VII comes out. I love the FF series and this one looks like it feels. Anyway, a few questions as... FINAL FANTASY VII

1. Are Cid, Tifa, Red XIII, Vincent, Barret, and Yuffie controllable party members?
2. Are there any more characters?
3. It's already out in Japan but, when will it be

out here?

4. Will it be Final Fantasy VII or IV (I hope it is VII, it sounds more transatlantic)?

5. If Shinra runs on Mako energy, then why is it SEC (Shinra Electric Power Company)?

6. What kind of pencils does Tetsuya Nomura use?

7. Isn't Tifa cute?

That's it. Seven questions, ironic, huh?

Jeremy Thomas
Cambridge, UK

This letter is just the tip of Final Fantasy iceberg that smashed into my post-bag Titanic this month. Hopefully Takahi's review should answer most of your questions, but for those of you who have worked yourself up into a snafu about FFVII leading frenzy, here's a few more FF nuggets.

1. Yes. All of them.

2. I take it you mean playable characters other than the above? Not that I know of. But there is a Game Stop code that allows you to have Sephiroth and P-Cloud in your party.

3. September the 7th is the date to mark on your calendar. Just think... that's nearly six months till you get to play an English version of FFVII. But you wishful you read Japanese now, eh?

4. Good news Jeremy. Sony took the game is now distinguished enough to retain the Japanese series title. FFVII it is!

5. Nmmmm. That's a good question. Probably because Shinra translates the energy from the planet into electricity.

6. The lead bird.

7. Disturbingly so. Just wait for the ending! And Jeremy, look up 'ironic' in the dictionary.

Dear Postscriptage,

I'm really worried. You see, I've got a

Saturn, and after a quick trip home to the States, I finally got a chance to see the PlayStation dominating the gaming scene first hand. For me, it was positively frightening. All stores that had demo machines set up, the Saturn demo either wasn't working or had some overly lackluster game running (the original WFFI Come on!) whereas the PS has games like Star Gladiator, Twisted Metal 2 or Total No. 1. And I haven't even mentioned the N64.

New I'm back in Japan and it seems that the Saturn is faltering here as well. It's most likely due to the promise of FFVII for the PS, but why are really cool anime-related games coming out for the PS only? I mean look at it: *Breath of Fire*, *Ranma 1/2*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *Super Mario Bros J* and *Battle Angel* to name a few. Okay, the Saturn got a *Macross* shooter, two *Evangelion* adventure games and a *Magick Knight RayForce* RPG (I'm still waiting, Working Designs). The PS has the edge by far.

Now here's the kicker—I just read in a Japanese gaming mag something that made my heart skip a beat in a bad way—*Dragon Quest VII* and *PlayStation*! It doesn't spell the beginning of the end I don't know what dies, Hello, Sega, if there was ever a reason to make a new PlayStation game, this is it!

Don't get me wrong, I love my Saturn. It's just I don't want to see my game system of choice get crushed by Sony's marketing muscle and Nintendo's popularity, or get left out in the cold by all the third parties. I've been down that road before with my Duo. It's not a pleasant drive.

So Peety, what do you make of this dilemma? Is the Saturn being overshadowed in almost every respect by the PS? Does Sega have any new up their sleeves to pull them through this crisis? I would greatly appreciate your input, Destin Blaine Javier
MAF Abzug, Japan

Well, when you're right, you're right. I won't try to sugar coat it Destin, the Saturn is definitely third in the race right now. The amount of times I've seen defunct Saturn displays in chain stores is truly distressing. But I don't think Sega is ready to give up the ghost quite yet.

Besides, why should the PlayStation's success stop you enjoying your system, or the numerous brilliant games available for it? Independence Day may well be the highest grossing film ever, but does that make it the best? Of course not. You're right not to underestimate the importance of the *End/Sony deal*, but I wouldn't worry too much about Sega losing third party support. Even though the Saturn has sold four million from the PS or N64, as Yuichi Miyaji pointed out, the Sega user base is proportionately more better than Sony or Nintendo, meaning it's still profitable to produce a Saturn game. As for new up sleeves, the new *Bandai* merger should bring a few surprises, and keep an eye out for WFF3...

Dear Outpost/Netmeister of Peah,

Being one of the female gamers writing in, I would first like to compliment you on listing our voices to "heard". The videogame community cannot ignore us! Now onto my rant. Who was it that said Tetsuya Nomura's FFVII art sucked?

GAMEFAN: UP TO THE MINUTE

As usual, we just can't close an issue of GameFan without squeezing in every last bit of goods. These Wild 9 shots arrived just hours before we shipped film and so, we booted a house ad and voila! Wild 9!

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they do not make. They're pioneers, ded-
gum-it! Their latest experiment, Wild 9 is
still a ways out (4th Q) as the team tack-
les the formidable challenge they've once
again laid out for themselves.

Judging by these screens I believe it's safe
to assume that the camera work in W9
promises to be absolutely phenomenal.
The storyline I'm told, is equally capacious,
with TV and action figure tie-ins already on
the horizon. We'll dive deep in to WB
the moment we get a preview copy. Until then
enjoy the latest batch of actual screens
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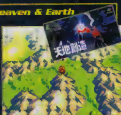
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